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SIR A. SASHIAH
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PREFACE.

CSL

who has had for Sir A. Sashiah Sastri almost a filial love and regard pressed him to write a sketch of his career. Sir A. Sashiah Sastri now felt bound to do something and wrote in reply "In the circle of my private friends also a wish has been expressed that I should write a short autobiography of myself or that I should place in the hands of some willing friend the materials for one. I doubt very much whether my career and life are worth such a chronicle and I often felt that my friends out of their partiality were rather overrating me. If it were only to please your Highness I shall, however, make an effort and bring out a sketch."

But Sir A. Sashiah Sastri soon found that at his age and with his failing memory he was becoming unequal to the task. I expressed a wish to undertake the work and he readily and kindly acceded to my request and placed all available materials at my disposal.

To write the biography of a great man during



PREFACE.

CSL
i

his life-time is peculiarly difficult and delicate. To judge correctly of his life and work as a whole one must look at them, in perspective as it were, from a convenient distance of time. Under the mellowing and harmonising influence of time the trivial and the evanescent disappear and the essential and the permanent are brought into relief. It is, therefore, presumptuous to attempt to select, from among the materials of unequal value which make up the reputation of a *living* celebrity, those more solid elements which are destined to build for him a lasting monument.

It is, again, a peculiarly difficult task to judge aright of the actions of a statesman. It is often impossible to apply to them the full stringency of private morals. Vast and opposing interests, overwhelming expediencies and the conflict that there often is between benefit to a community and justice to an individual often times necessitate and justify a code of political ethics which



PREFACE.

CSL

may not be in complete harmony with the Sermon on the Mount and it might not be large, judicial or comprehensive judgment to measure the doings of a statesman by the formulæ of an abstract moralist or the ethical notions of a cloistered student of books.

In the following pages I have not taken on myself the ambitious rôle of a critic. I have tried, with the materials at my command, to tell a plain narrative of facts and events, leaving the reader to form his own judgment. I have, as far as practicable, allowed letters and records to corroborate my tale and I can confidently assert that I have said nothing that has not been based on trustworthy evidence.

Biographers are seldom free from the Boswellian lues and it is specially hard for the biographer of a living worthy to escape the suspicion of being purely a panegyrist. But if the life of a great man is to be a guidance and an inspiration, is it not better that we should learn and, learning,



PREFACE.

CSL⁶
XI

love those traits in him, that would help us to live a fuller and a nobler life, than that our attention should be prominently drawn to his failings? Great men are but men and cannot claim any exemption from human imperfection and we who study their lives can do better than note their weakness and fondly imagine that here at least are some things in which we can claim equality with them.

This work is perhaps the first of its kind in Southern India and for the shortcomings that may be noticeable I crave the indulgence that is generally accorded to a first attempt.

.PUDUKOTA, { B. V. KAMESVARA AIYAR.
21st October 1902. }



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION.

Page.

The virtues of the Kaveri—Amaravati—Sashiah's birth—
The midwife's prophecy—Hereditv vindicated—Taken
to Madras—Training under Gopala Aiyar—Joined
the General Assembly's School—Lessons in the
Bible—Conversion of a few high caste students—
University Board—The opening of the Madras High
School—E. B. Powell's devotion to his work—School-
boy adventures—Attachment to Powell—Relation
between master and pupil—Hard up for schooling
fees—Powell to the rescue—Pachaiyappa's Charities
—Endowment in the Pachaiyappa's College—Prizes
for hand-writing—Honours and rewards in the
High School—Tutor to Mr. Gundappa's sons—
Sashiah's betrothal—*Ollock* of a girl—Proficiency in
English Composition—Secretary of the Students'
Club—In imitation of Demosthenes—Degree of Pro-
ficient—Testimonials from Mr. Powell and Mr.
Gordon—The boy makes the man

1

CHAPTER II.

IN A ROVING COMMISSION.

Such a little boy!—Clerk in the Revenue Board—A
modest start in life—Work in the Section Depart-
ment—Sashiah's hand requiring to be settled!—



CONTENTS.

CSL

Page.

Transfer to the Current Department—The Circular orders—Mates in harness—A hopeful and buoyant set—Work under the Board Sheristedar—Dunning for news—A novel use of Cannon—Work out of office—The Northern Circars in a bad way—Special Commissioner for the Northern Circars—Shall I see you again?—Travel in the “fifties”—Companion in exile—Commission in procession—Inmate of Mr. Rayappa’s family—Moments of depression—Take heart and work on!—Antiquarian study under Sir Walter Elliot—Learning work and official training—Trip to Jagannath—Interview with Mr. Porter—The responsible wielder of the destinies of a taluq ..	29
---	----

CHAPTER III.

IN MASULIPATAM.

Mr. Norton’s advice and congratulations—Other congratulations—The Tahsildar fifty years ago—Torch-light <i>Salaam</i> —The shell of power—Shutting up the flood-gates of corruption—Dignity in the service of efficiency—Crystal Palace Exhibition—The Glory of Masula— <i>Palang-posh</i> —Burglary a thing of the past— <i>Chalo</i> !—Taking the Census—The humours of the situation— <i>Jamabundy</i> in the earlier days—Regulation IX of 1822—Holloway’s disposal of petitions—Lushington <i>versus</i> Pycroft—Naib Sheristedar—The Debating Society—Intellectual jousts—Fluidity and grandiosity of expression—Head Sheristedar ..	55
--	----



CONTENTS.

SL
xv

CHAPTER IV.

A NATIVE COLLECTOR.

	<i>Page.</i>
Weeding out—A wrong conclusion rather than no conclusion—‘Official’ cat—Avaunt Lamp-light!—Changes in the collection of revenue—Interpreter between the Government and the people—Secret of his success—Chats with the Pandit—A walk through the flower-beds of Sanskrit Literature—Wistful look to the South—President of the Hindu High School—Sir Arthur Havelock in praise of Sashiah Sastri—A faint wave of “57”—Masulipatam address to the Queen—Mr. Newill’s short cut—Correction in <i>Camera</i> —Deputy Collector—Inam Commission—The feeling of having been passed over—Dubbed Sastri—Special Assistant to the Inam Commissioner.. ..	90

CHAPTER V.

IN THE INAM COMMISSION.

The principle of Inams—Insurrection in Cuddappah—The guiding principles of the Inam Commission—Mr. Taylor and his Assistants—Division of work between the two Assistants—Reconciling the Inamdars to the step—Family ties—Winding up—A farewell address and a silver plate	119
--	-----

CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE VENNAR TO CHEPAUK.

Deputy Collector at Tanjore—Order out of chaos—Vice-president of the Municipality—The famous	
--	--



CONTENTS.

CSL

Page.

Tanjore mosquitoes—Cleansing the Augean Stable— On the banks of the Vennar—Closing his mother's eyes—Fellow of the University—Board Sheristedar —Admirable drafts—Rs. 1,000 a month—Working away—Happy fellowship—Dewanship of Travancore offered and accepted	136
---	-----

CHAPTER VII.

IN THE LAND OF CHARITY.

Travancore as described by Sashiah Sastri—Sashiah Sastri *versus* Rama Aiyangar!—Congratulations—Ayilyam Tirunal—The incident of the aspiring Brahman—From a monarch to a Magistrate!—Confirmation—Taking his bearings—Piloting the finances—*Proverties* and *maniams*—Liberal adjustment of emoluments—Encouragement of merit—Relation between the head of the Executive and heads of departments defined—Reforms in the High Court—The appointment of a capable Secretary—Attaches—*Cadjan* replaced by paper—Gold currency—Improvements in the Salt Department—New roads—Wurkally Barrier works—Renovation of the Padmatirtham—Rebuilding of the tower of Suchendram Shrine—The gilt spires of Sri Padmanabha—Expenditure on temples defended—Introduction of grants-in-aid—Improvements in the museum and public gardens—An honest man is the noblest work of God—Jurisdiction over European British subjects—The cause of charity vigorously championed—Raining food on thousands of starving souls from over the Ghauts—Tours in Upper India—"The best conversationist in



CONTENTS.

CSL
xvii

Page.

the South"—Pilgrimage to Tripati and Rameswaram— Invited to give evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons on Indian Finance—Declined on the score of health and religion—Incidental reference to his views on the Indian Congress— Fleeting clouds—Will stand on honourable terms or else retire—Following up the advantage—Winding up his administration—Acknowledgments—Sum- mary	152
--	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER WORK.

On the banks of the Kaveri—A schoolboy's holiday—
Rumours of appointment—Vice-president of the
Famine Relief Committee at Trichy—*Raison d'etre*
of Famine Relief Committees—Suffering Goshia
women—Clothes for the poor—Weavers on their
legs once more—The hard lot of the poor at Tanjore—
Relief sanctioned—Speech at the Banqueting Hall—
Trichy Address to the Duke of Buckingham—C.S.I.—
Member of the Madras Legislative Council—Madras
Member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council—The
present ruler of Travancore congratulates—Acknow-
ledgment by the Duke of Buckingham—In the
Madras Legislative Council for a second term—
Similar honour in the Viceregal Council for a second
term declined—Admiration for Lord Ripon—Minute
on Local Self-Government—*Amende honorable*—Il-
bert's Bill—The reason of his attitude—Development
of Industry in India—Greater publicity to legis-
lative measures—Advances to agriculturists—Age of



	Page.
consent—Evidence before the Public Service Commission—Tanjore Settlement—Advocacy of his views . .	232

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE TONDIMAN RAJ.

Sir Madhava Rao on affairs at Pudukota—Negotiations—The Rajah's pressing invitation—Sir Madhava Rao urges—Acceptance of office—An empty Treasury—Evils of *Amani*—Remarks of Sir Walter Elliot—Animadversions on change from *Amani* examined—Permanent remission of revenue—Government's disapproval—Minor reforms—Revenue Survey and Settlement—Enfranchisement of Service Inams—*Delenda Est Pudukota Sal*—Casuarina plantations—No room in the Treasury!—Revision of Salaries—Exercise of patronage—Irrigation policy explained—"Permanent memorials of his tenure of power"—"The roads, the best I have seen in India"—Town Improvements—Town tanks looking their best—Stamping out the Guinea-worm—A magnificent sheet of fresh water—New Suburbs—Weekly fair—A little less of the hovel and a little more of the home—Campaign against the prickly-pear—Confounded for the nonce—Really getting on!—Medical relief—Regulations framed—Settlement of boundary disputes—Security within the State—Self-respect in the lapsed and fallen—Changes in the judicial machinery—Deadlock in the working of the Chief Court—Levy of Court fees—Crowning the educational edifice—Views regarding mass education—Girls' School—Management of charities—Palmiest days of ancient Greece—Settlement of the *Mel ara*—



CONTENTS.

SL
xix

Page.

<i>manai</i> —Stewardship of <i>Chinnaramanai</i> —Creditors of the Rajah—Reply to Mr. Digby—An all-canopying personality—‘High crimes and misdemeanours’—A grand effort—Relations with the Rajah—Salute to His Highness—Regency—Education of the minor Rajah—Installation of the present ruler—Lord Wenlock’s appreciation—Sashiah’s reply.. ..	290
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

OTIUM CUM DIGNITATE.

Feeling for others’ woes—Loss of loyal help-mate—Perpetuation of the family—Home once more—The mansion on Kaveri banks—“Earth has not anything to show more fair”—Heart with Pudukota—A day’s programme—Visits of Governors and Viceroys—K.C.S.I.—Concluding remarks	391
--	-----



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

AN INDIAN STATESMAN.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION.

The Kâveri has long been held in great reverence by the Brahmans of Southern India. What the Sarasvati was to the Vedic Seers, what the Ganges was to the ancient heroes of Aryavarta, that the Kâveri has been to the Brahmans in the South. Bands of emigrant Aryas settled on the banks of the sacred stream, flourishing colonies sprang up, all along her course, sacred hearths were set up, and Aryan learning and Aryan institutions throve in the new land of their adoption with fresh and youthful vigour. It is, however, in the delta of the Tanjore District that the Kâveri has lavished her wealth most liberally. The early rulers too were patrons of Brahman learning, and the Brahman of the Kâveri delta kept up the literary traditions of his ancestors



and represented Aryan culture and Aryan learning in the South.

On the banks of the Vettâr, one of the deltaic mouths of the Kâveri in the Tanjore District, stands a village known as *Amarâvati*. The *Agrahâram*, or the Brahman part of it, is a single street with a single row of houses, about twelve in all, running east to west, and terminates at one end in a temple dedicated to Vishnu and at the other in another dedicated to Siva. The village with its eight *velis* of wet land was originally in the possession of Sudras—Kallars by caste—and not entirely reclaimed from its native wildness. The lands were bought from them by a Raja of Tanjore, and made over as a free grant to the Brahmans of a village a few miles off, who desired to shift their residence to the banks of a stream. It was in this *Agrahâram* that Sashiah was born on the 22nd March, 1828. He was the fifth of the six sons of a Vaidika Brahman, a priest who superintended domestic rites in the Brahman households of *Amarâvati* and a few neighbouring villages. The payments he received in money on the occasions of these ceremonies were insignificant, but when the time of annual harvesting came round, the good people of the villages paid the priest in kind, and these annual grants kept the family above want.



Sashiah's *début* on the stage of life was a sore disappointment to his mother. On hearing that she had once more given birth to a boy, she is said to have exclaimed in vexation, "Would that I had been spared this unwelcome addition." The midwife who attended the *accouchement* thought differently. "This son of yours," she said to the disappointed mother, "will be the luckiest in the family." When, in later years, her random prophecy was more than realized, the woman did not fail to turn it to account. She often came to Sashiah with the story of his birth and never went away without substantial marks of his regard.

Sashiah's father was no great scholar, but champions of heredity will be glad to know that learning had been in the family, that his great-grandfather was more than a local celebrity and had gone to the Court of the Peshwas at Poona to display his Vedic learning, and returned home laden with presents and honours. But succeeding times appear to have been less favourable to the development of the family intellect till the subject of the present sketch rose to vindicate the principle of heredity.

When Sashiah was eight years old he, as a Brahman, received the rights of second birth, and was invested with the holy thread. One of his



uncles, Gopala Aiyar by name, was, at this time, earning a decent living at Madras as a dealer in precious stones. At the suggestion of his mother, this gentleman undertook to keep the boy with him and educate him at Madras, thus relieving the growing family of a portion of its burden. (He had already taken into his care an elder brother of Sashiah.) The mother was, however, loth to part with the boy—he had won his way into her affections, and become quite her darling. But the boy had higher thoughts than vegetating in the village. He coaxed her into acquiescence and, with a subdued sense of superiority over his less fortunate companions whom he was leaving behind, made preparations for his journey, which consisted in making up a bundle of reeds out of those that skirted his native stream—reeds which he was to improvise into writing instruments to serve him in his metropolitan student life. Thus armed, he was ready to set out on his journey. His mother was sad at heart; he was all aglow with present importance and the consciousness of future greatness. “Take heart, mother,” said he, “I now go a poor boy, but I shall return in another style—with pack-bullocks laden with jingling coins.” These words, and more than they, the flitting across his path from left to right, of the red bird *pôttu*, an event



which happening at the commencement of a journey is believed to augur brilliant success, carried some comfort to the cheerless heart of the mother, and in part reconciled her to the separation. He dearly loved his mother and as dearly his native village, Amarâvati, his "Sweet Auburn" as he used to call it from the time he became acquainted with the lovely poem of Goldsmith. But it was no time for idle regrets, and the plucky boy was taken to Madras by his brother who had come down for the purpose from Madras.

Gopala Aiyar, when he began life at Madras, had started with no more capital than a brave heart and steady principles. These he had found a sufficient equipment for life and he never missed an opportunity of inculcating the lesson into the youthful mind of his nephew. When once Sashiah was caught uttering a falsehood, the stern disciplinarian made him say a hundred times that he would never repeat the offence, and each time he recited the lesson he was made to perform a penitential genuflexion (a familiar mode of punishment known as *Tôppikkaranam*, in Tamil) by way of emphasis. On another occasion, when the boy's old grandmother asked him to do her a little piece of service he replied that he had better work than doing menial services to



old dames. The uncle, happening to overhear this remark, impressed on him the importance of showing respect to elders by a somewhat liberal employment of the *argumentum baculinum*. In these healthy moral surroundings the boy now found himself placed, and it is needless to state that the lessons he learnt at this impressionable period he has carried with him all through life. It may be mentioned here that when Gopala Aiyar was in his death-bed in 1847, his last words to Sashiah were—

“Be honest, my boy, and God will bless you.”

Soon after his removal to Madras, Sashiah was placed under the care of a private teacher, a Mudali, under whom he picked up some acquaintance with Tamil. This course of studies was kept up for six months. About this time a private school for teaching English was started in the street where he lived, and the boy, with a few others, was put under the teacher, a Portuguese named Francis Rodriguese. Here he learnt his A B C and the three R's. What little he learnt here was however enough to inspire him with gratitude to his first teacher of English and Francis Rodriguese, to the last day of his life, and after him, his wife, continued to be a pensioner on his bounty. It was about this time—in 1837—that the Reverend John Anderson,



EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION.

the earliest Missionary of the Church of Scotland, and pioneer of higher education in the Presidency, arrived in Madras and started on the 3rd April, 1837, what was known as the General Assembly's School. The boys of the private school, half a dozen in number, at once went over to the Missionary institution. Mr. Anderson was soon joined by the Rev. Robert Johnston and the Rev. John Braidwood, and the school which was in the fulness of time to develop into the present Christian College proved a great success. Here Sashiah remained till 1840 and received a fair grounding in the several branches of study. Messrs. Johnston and Braidwood taught Arithmetic and Mathematics, and Mr. Huffton, an East Indian teacher, gave lessons in Euclid's Elements. Clift's 'Elements of Geography' and Marshman's 'History of India' were among the books taught during this period. The Rev. John Anderson supervised the Bible studies and taught selected chapters from the Old and the New Testaments along with the catechism of the church. The object of the institution, in the words of Mr. Anderson, was 'simply to convey through the channel of a good education as great an amount of truth as possible to the native mind, especially of Bible truth. Every branch of knowledge communicated is to be made

A 3



subservient to this desirable end.' The Missionary thus devoted special attention to the teaching of the Bible, and Sashiah took to the study with zest and became a great favourite with the teacher. He could recite passages from the Bible very effectively and seemed to have caught the tone and the spirit from the earnest expounder, who used to take the boy from class to class and make him recite selected passages, such as 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' and 'The Sermon on the Mount,' to rouse a spirit of emulation in the other students. Years afterwards writing to the Rev. T. H. Dodson, M.A., Principal of the S. P. G. College, Trichinopoly, who had sent him a copy of the Bible, he says :—

" The Bible was the first book I read and that was in 1839 under the Rev. John Anderson. I had always a copy on my table and it was a treat to a mind disturbed by worldly care to dip into it now and then and taste a drop of honey as it were from the inexhaustible hive of wisdom. My last copy went out of my possession.

I was very glad to possess a copy again and the first thing I did was to go over my old favourite Psalms again—'The Heavens declare the glory of God,' 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' &c. The pleasure I derived at this stage was something indescribable. It is under all circumstances best to have the solace of religion in trials and difficulties and bereavements and it is an inestimable relief to the mind now and then to turn from matters diurnal to matters eternal."

There is no doubt whatever that he profited



EARLY LIFE AND EDUCATION.

CSL
9

considerably by the lessons in the Bible, and he expressed himself to that effect in a reply he wrote when he was requested to take part in the celebration of the Christian College Day for 1897—.

“ I have, of course, much pleasure in responding to the invitation and beg to express my thanks to the committee for thinking of my name for the honour. Probably I am the oldest surviving pupil of the late Rev. John Anderson, who founded the Free Church Mission School in 1837, of which I was a pupil in the years '38, '39, and '40. For my first lesson in English I sat at the feet of the Rev. John Anderson, and it was from him that I first learnt those moral truths which strike deep into our minds when young. I was then only about ten The Rev. Mr. Johnston was a co-worker with the Rev. Mr. Anderson and the Rev. Mr. Braidwood joined them soon after. Mr. Hufhton was the teacher of my class. Their names are all still enshrined in my memory as they were the first to teach me from the Bible the love and fear of God which has carried me safe through life. May this be the case with all who can claim the privilege of calling the Christian College their *Alma Mater* ! ”

In 1840 some high-caste students of the school were converted to Christianity. The native community was alarmed and a widespread consternation seized the public. The enraged multitude laid siege to the school, then located in the premises of the present Municipal Office, and threatened violence. Armed with his Highland club, the Rev. John Anderson came out to face



the tumultuous mob and dispersed them at the point of—the bludgeon ! The scene must have made a profound impression on young Sashiah ; for writing more than half a century afterwards to Dr. William Miller, he thus hits it off in a few happy words :—“ The school was then in the premises now occupied by the Municipal Office, and I have a very vivid recollection of the Rev. John Anderson, as he, pressed by the crowd that were surging round and besieging the building as it were, came out and stood in the verandah and flourished his Highland club at them. This was on the occasion of the first conversion of the young men * whom I have named.”

Many of the students were withdrawn from the institution, and Sashiah among the rest, the general idea of the people being that the Missionaries were in possession of certain charms by which they allured youngsters into their fold. Meanwhile the Government had been maturing a scheme of general education. So early as 1835, in response to the Bengal Despatch, a Committee of Native Education had been appointed with a Member of Council as President and five other members. The elaborate proposals of this Committee had, however, come to nothing. In 1839,

* The Revd. S. P. Rajagopal, Venkataramiah and Ethirajulu.



when Lord Elphinstone became Governor of Madras, he elaborated a scheme of his own, in accordance with which a University Board was established in January 1840 with a President, (Mr. George Norton, the Advocate-General, who had taken great interest in native education) and fourteen Governors, of whom seven were to be natives. The University Board resolved to open a High School. But before the opening of the High School, a Preparatory School was established through the instrumentality of the native members of the Board. Sashiah, with many of his schoolmates, joined the newly-established Preparatory School and passed from thence to the High School, which was formally opened on Wednesday morning, the 14th of April, 1841.

It was an imposing ceremony. Lord Elphinstone, the Governor of Madras, who presided on the occasion, came attended by all his staff in full uniform, and was shortly followed by H. H. the Nawab of the Carnatic who, upon his arrival, was received by a guard of honour and with the usual salute. The principal members of society at the Presidency Town, both European and Native, including the Members of Council, mustered in grand array to honour the occasion. The President and the Governors of the institution had indeed omitted nothing to make the



inaugural ceremony as grand as it could be, and it was estimated that there were no fewer than a thousand and five hundred persons present in the College Hall, which presented probably the largest and most representative assemblage of the Native population ever seen at Madras till then. The grounds and roads about were thronged, and some thousands besides were collected at the High School House, to which the students proceeded from the College Hall. Among those now admitted into the High School was Sashiah.

The High School, started under such brilliant auspices, sent out in the course of a few years some of the brightest ornaments of Southern India,—Ranganadha Sastryar, Sir. T. Madhava Rao, Shadagopacharlu, Ramiengar, Basil Lavery, Rangacharlu, and Sashiah—each of whom has left

“Foot-prints on the sands of time,
Foot-prints, that perhaps another,
Sailing o’er life’s solemn main,
A forlorn and ship-wrecked brother,
Seeing, shall take heart again.”

A great part of the success of the High School was due to the master-mind that ruled its destinies—Mr. E. B. Powell, a Wrangler of the University of Cambridge, who was appointed to the headmastership of the institution. With



instincts of a born teacher and a single-minded devotion to his sacred work, this gentleman dedicated his time and his extraordinary talents to the advancement of his students from the lowest grade of scholastic instruction up to a course of study more congenial to his own eminent attainments. Among his boys he moved a boy, sharing their delights and anxieties and directing their pursuits and aspirations and was thus able to stamp his individuality on their plastic minds and animate their souls with a zeal for knowledge and for whatever was pure and noble. Many a time and oft, on clear and starlit nights, would he take with him his most advanced boys and tell them the story of the heavens in sweet and indelible words and pour into their willing ears his knowledge and his wisdom, till they caught his spirit and his enthusiasm and unconsciously imbibed all those elevating impulses that radiated from him in a thousand untold ways.

Mr. Powell took a parental interest in his boys. He had no idea that his duty was circumscribed by the school-house or the school-hours. At his own cost he provided a set of cricket appliances and taught the game himself and played with the boys on almost every day they had it. Sashiah was voted very good at the wicket.



Mr. Powell also taught them the indoor game of Battledoor and Shuttlecock which they played in the long hall of the school-building in wet weather. Sometimes they had the country games—*Kittippullu*, a kind of indigenous cricket, and *Uppukkodu*. This latter was played in a space marked out like salt pans, with lines drawn across in both directions at right angles. These lines were guarded by one set of boys, while another strove to pass them into the next compartment without being caught.

Nor did they lack more exciting, if also more questionable, pursuits. Some bolder adventurers, of whom Sashiah was one, disdained

“The limits of their little reign,
And unknown regions dared descry.”

Pelting at wood-apples was a favourite amusement, and Sashiah and his merry band often fell into the hands of the gardener and had to purchase their freedom by ransoms of a few annas for each transgression. They added a little variety by occasional mango-stealing and poaching on the gardener's beds of peas !

If Mr. Powell loved his boys, they loved him no less. A word of praise from him, a nod of approval, or a smile of encouragement was their highest ambition, and an hour with him in



“social converse or instructive ease” was something to look forward to with eager delight or to be remembered with joyful gratitude, as can be seen from the following note :—

SUNDAY.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

This appears to be a beautifully clear evening. Shall we go over to Mr. Powell to gaze at the worlds above. I don't think we can pass the evening better, and surely it would be no desecration of the Sabbath as far as Mr. Powell is concerned.

I am,
Yours as ever,

V. RAMIAH.*

Sashiah (sometimes with his young cousin) would often go to Mr. Powell's and share in the merriments and juvenile amusements of the family. He refers to one of these occasions in a letter to Mr. E. B. Powell :—

“This last is no other than the son of Krishnasawami, my cousin—whom you used to remember very well as the little fellow who, to the question, “Why did God create light first?” answered very naively, “to enable Him to see.” Whenever I went to Madras I used to see your son and tell him of the days when he was born and had his first

* The writer of this note, it may be here stated, was at this time (1846) a senior student of the High School, afterwards, the Honourable V. Ramiengar, C.S.I., Sashiah's successor as Dewan of Travancore.



birth-day celebrated at Huddleston's, Adyar, at which I furnished the fireworks, and my little cousin, then six years old, was present to see the fireworks. These are very pleasant recollections to me at this distance of time."

It does one's heart good to contemplate this touching bond of union between the master and the pupil, a union of soul to soul that no time or space could break. Writing in 1896, after an interval of 50 years and more, Sashiah says to Mr. Powell :—

"I never ate my daily bread without remembering you The Vedic text says—*Mātri-Devo Bhava, Pitri-Devo Bhava, Achārya-Devo Bhava, Atithi-Devo Bhava*. That is to say, the first (after God) to reverence is the mother, the next the father, the next is the *Guru* (one's master), the next is the unexpected guest at your door. Allow me, therefore, the first thing before I proceed, to make my reverence or prostrations to you as my *Guru* and invoke your blessings."

Such reverent affection for the Acharya was the ideal and practice of the student in Ancient India and is still found here and there, though perhaps a little out of date now, when the professor and the student rarely see each other except in the lecture-room, the student self-sufficient and with an eye to the main chance of success in the University Examinations, and the professor seldom looking beyond his lectures to the lectured many; and Mr. Powell was a typical



Āchārya of the old days of India, whose relation to the pupil was a life-long tie.

That such was Mr. Powell's conception of the duties of a teacher can be seen from the following extract from a letter he wrote to Sashiah in 1848 while on a sea-voyage to recruit his health :—

“ I have no doubt of your deriving pleasure from the following few lines when I reflect upon the long and intimate connexion that has existed between you and me, and the satisfaction which, I believe, it has given us all. I trust also that you, as well as all my other graduates, will not allow the tie to be broken by the termination of the scholastic course. My teaching will have been but to little effect, if my scholars leave me with the impression that their education is completed ; in every case it is but begun ; and if this impression do not exist, as I hope and trust is the case, to no one can you so appropriately look for hints and advice regarding your future and more practical course of study than to him who was your teacher in the elements. According to the system of instruction that prevails in this stage of the world, teacher and pupil enter into a cold and formal relation to one another, which too is at an end after the lapse of a few years.”

It was Sashiah's good fortune to be moulded under such ennobling influences, and to this day Mr. Powell's is a name that awakens in his bosom the tenderest chords of affection. The Indian mind is essentially grateful, and kindness and courtesy from the ruling race seldom go unremembered to the dying day. As Sashiah writes



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

to Mr. G. N. Taylor under whom he had served in the Inam Commission :—

“You were almost the first civilian who treated us as gentlemen and more as brethren in the service than as subordinates. What feelings of pleasure rush upon the mind when memory brings back the conversaziones, the very first of their kind, which yourself or rather Mrs. Taylor and yourself used to improvise every week for our recreation as well as improvement both at Palamanair and other places. Yourself and Mrs. Taylor were so far and away ahead of your brother-civilians in these as well as, indeed, in all other respects, that we all felt a perfect void for many years after you left. Even now there are very few indeed who think and act in that way. The icy gulf which separates the native from European society is still there, and ‘*At homes*’ which are given at long intervals only reveal like lightning the darkness beyond.”

As a humble expression of his gratitude to his master, Sashiah contributed in 1872 Rs. 1,000, towards the statue of Mr. Powell, which now adorns the Presidency College.

Sashiah continued in the High School till May, 1848. It was a hard struggle, financially, in the early years of this period. The school-fees, which came to Rs. 4 a month, taxed all the resources of Gopala Aiyar, and in some months the boy had to be a defaulter. But his general intelligence and smartness had early attracted the attention of Mr. Powell, who took a particular interest in him, and coming to know of his



straitened circumstances, generously undertook to meet the charge of his fees from his own pocket. Sashiah thus alludes to this in a letter to Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, K.C.S.I. :—

“You were then a very young civilian and holding the office of Secretary to the High School Board. I was a boy about eleven or twelve years old, who had joined the School on its very first institution in 1840 or 1841. I used to come into your room once a month to pay my school-fee, as the collection or rather the receiving of it was one of your duties. I was too late one month and you were pleased, instead of being displeased at the default, to ask why I was so late with my fee. I pleaded poverty and you smiled. From that day, somehow or other, I became a marked boy, and every succeeding month you inquired how I was getting on, and, among other things, I think I said that Mr. Powell undertook to pay my fee out of his pocket. This rather strengthened your interest in me.”

But in a few months a change came for the better in his fortunes, and Sashiah was able to pay his own way. Pachaiyappa Mudaliar, a wealthy Hindu, who lived towards the close of the eighteenth century, had left about four lacs of rupees for the establishment of charities, chiefly religious. The funds were being misused by the successive executors of his will till the attention of the Government was drawn to it, and through the legal help of Mr. George Norton, Advocate-General, the funds with accumulated interest—amounting in all to nearly eight lacs



of rupees—came to be placed at the disposal of the charities. A body of Trustees was formed, and an English School was established in 1842 for affording gratuitous instruction to native youths in English and the Vernaculars. About the same time an endowment out of these funds was founded in the High School to help deserving lads in poor circumstances. Those who enjoyed the benefit of this endowment were divided into two classes—Pachaiyappa's Free Scholars who had their school-fees paid for them, and Pachaiyappa's Endowed Scholars who received stipends, ranging from Rs. 7 to Rs. 10. Sashiah received a stipend, and he afterwards received a Government stipend which, towards the close of his school-life, reached Rs. 20. This timely help placed him above want, and his heart was ever full of lively feelings of gratitude to this benefactor of the Hindu community. When, in 1894, he was requested to preside on the Commemoration Day of Pachaiyappa's College, he wrote thus in reply :—

“I should have started to-day so as to get to Madras to-morrow and be ready to preside on Saturday. But the bronchitis is still very rough on me, and I am for the nonce *hors de combat*.....

The programme is well laid out, and I hope all boys, young and old, will enjoy the day. Please tell them from me that, though not present in body, I shall be with them



in spirit and wish with them for endless commemoration days in eternal gratitude to the great benefactor, Pachaiyappa, to whose munificent bequest so many owe so much of their success in life. Please tell them that I keenly regret my absence ; for, as the oldest Pachaiyappa boy living, I should have very much enjoyed the honour and pleasure of presiding on the Commemoration Day."

As a mark of his gratitude he, later on in life, provided Pachaiyappa's College with an endowment of Rs. 2,000, the interest of which is to go towards two prizes in his name—one for elocution and the other for the best essay in English. It may be mentioned in passing that the three foremost educational institutions in the Presidency town, the Presidency College, the Christian College, and Pachaiyappa's may thus claim him, each, as her oldest boy living.

Other honours also came to him in the course of his student days in the High School. He carried off prizes for hand-writing year after year, till it was ruled that they should not be monopolized by the same scholar. Lord Elphinstone who used to visit the school almost every Tuesday, on his way home from the Council Chamber, as well as many other illustrious visitors, were much impressed by his bold and steady hand. He secured Pachaiyappa's Vernacular prize for the years 1846-47 and also Pachaiyappa's Translation prize of Rs. 70 for the



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

best translation into the Vernacular, of a few chapters of Arnold's 'Lectures on Italy.' In 1847 he gained the Elphinstone prize for an essay on 'What is civilization?' the like of which, in point of style, Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, Acting Governor of Madras, remarked at the Presidency College Anniversary of 1872, he had not heard read by a native. The Marquis of Tweeddale, who succeeded Lord Elphinstone as Governor of Madras, gave him a reward of Rs. 70, as the following official communication from the Chief Secretary to the President and Governors of the Madras University may show :—

6th May, 1846.

"I am directed to make known to you the desire of the most noble the Governor in Council to mark the sense he entertains of the merit and general proficiency of Sashiah, the youth whose attainments and good conduct were brought prominently under His Lordship's notice at the late anniversary. His Lordship, anxious to reward general merit, has resolved to bestow a pecuniary prize of Rupees seventy on Sashiah, and has accordingly issued the accompanying order."

The Government had established a Council of Education and had transferred to it a portion of the duties originally entrusted to the University Board. The primary object of the appointment of this new body was to organize and superintend certain public examinations of candidates



for appointments in the public service and to offer pecuniary rewards to scholars, which were to be decided by an annual public competition. The Council lasted only two years (1845-47) and did not do much practical work, but the first Government reward of Rupees three hundred, which the Council offered, fell to Sashiah. When the foundation stone of Pachaiyappa's College was laid by Mr. George Norton on the 2nd October, 1846, in the midst of a vast concourse of the native inhabitants of Madras, Sashiah wrote a eulogy, on Pachaiyappa and his munificence, which was publicly read on the occasion. It was written by Sashiah, but his stammering which was in those early days extreme prevented him from reading it himself. A silk purse full of gold mohurs was presented to him for it, and the essay appeared in the next issue of the *Madras Crescent*.

It is worthy of note that Sashiah, when writing an account of these proceedings to his friend, T. Madhava Rao, who, having already taken the Degree, was residing for the time being at Kumbhakonam, forgets to mention the little incident of his obtaining a reward. Madhava Rao writes to Sashiah in a letter, dated 13th October, 1846 :—

“ I feel highly obliged to you for your having condescended to give me a copious description of the solemn ceremonies



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

that took place on the occasion of laying the foundation stone to Pachaiyappa's New School. Perhaps your modesty has forbidden you to mention whether you received any rewards on the occasion. It is highly gratifying to see that a handsome reward has been offered to the best essayist in the school, and still more gratifying it is to anticipate that *you* will invariably monopolise it."

When, in May 1846, the anniversary of the High School was celebrated and prizes were given away to the successful students, Sashiah came in for such a large share of the honours that it attracted the notice of one of the visitors, Sir Henry Montgomery, (the first) Revenue Secretary to the Government, who drew the young man aside, shook hands with him wishing him joy of his honours and asked him if he did not hail from the banks of the Kâveri. Such intelligence, he held, could come from that stream alone. His surmise proving correct, he felt doubly glad and told Sashiah that he would thenceforward watch his career with interest; and happening at this time to be on the look out for a private tutor to the sons of his protegee, Mr. Gundappa Raoji, Head Sheristadar of Tanjore, Sir Henry secured the services of Sashiah. This tuition, for which he was paid Rupees twenty-five a month, continued from 1846 to the end of his school-days. Money flowed in upon him from various sources and thus, even



as a student, not only was he able to materially relieve his uncle, but he was in a position to send substantial aid to his family at Amarâvati. His father had died soon after Sashiah's removal to Madras, and his uncle died in 1847. But by this time, as we have already seen, Sashiah was more than equal to the burden of supporting two families. In 1847 a marriage was arranged between Sashiah and Sundari, a motherless girl, brought up by her uncle Ramaswami Aiyar, a native of Konerirajapuram, a village near Kumbhakonam. He, like Gopala Aiyar, had settled at Madras, and was earning a living as a broker in a small way. The betrothal took place at Konerirajapuram during the summer recess.

Apropos of this event, Sashiah wrote to his friend V. Ramiah and jocosely described his young wife as an "ollock" * of a girl. His friend was equal to the occasion and made a repartee that "ollock" would, in due course, grow into a measure.†

Sashiah's *forte* at school was English, and his attempts in English Composition at this period display a superior order of excellence. Mr. Powell in his annual Report wrote :—

"In a knowledge of History and English Poetry, and in

* The smallest measure known as கழஞ்சு in Tamil. † Known as *lit.*



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

Essay-writing, or English Composition generally, I consider A. Sashiah, and perhaps V. Ramanujam, to be superior to most, if not all, of the Fourth Class lads of the year 1844 I take the liberty of calling the attention of the President and Governors.....especially to Sashiah's fifth answer in History, and the essay written off-hand by the same boy in the examination room, both of which I think worthy of considerable praise. If Sashiah were sound in Mathematics and Physics, I would not hesitate to recommend him for a certificate this year ; but as it is, I think it will be more advantageous for him to wait till the next annual examination, when he will doubtless take a very honourable degree."

So Sashiah stayed on and earned a Proficient's degree with honours. Among other things, he set himself to correcting his stammer. A club was instituted in the school with Sashiah as Secretary, and extempore speeches were delivered by the members every Saturday. On Sundays, meetings were held in the house of V. Ramiengar, a senior student, and dramatic scenes were regularly acted out. Having read the anecdote of Demosthenes, Sashiah would walk along the deserted parts of the sea beach with his mouth full of pebbles and roar out at the top of his voice selected passages from the choicest specimens of British eloquence, till, under such persistent attack, the impediment in his speech yielded a great deal to his stubborn will, and became in later life a slight hesitation



which has added, if anything, a grace to the genial flow of his conversation.

On the 29th May, 1848, he took the Degree of Proficient in the First Scale of Honours, standing first among his fellows in the order of merit, and received the Ring, set with Emeralds, of a Proficient of the First Class.

Mr. Powell, when he sent Sashiah out into the world, wrote :—

“ I have a very high idea of Sashiah's integrity and would not hesitate to place the utmost confidence in him. I trust his success in life may be commensurate with his talents, industry and good conduct.”

Mr. A. A. Gordon, M.A., Senior Professor, writing of Sashiah, says : “ While a student within its walls, he endeared himself to all by his upright conduct and amiable disposition.”

Yes. He had endeared himself to all, and in the inner circle of his friends and schoolmates his presence was a perpetual sunshine. With a merry twinkle in the eye that suggested peace at heart and good will to all, with a fund of humour ready at the slightest hint to burst out in sparkling wit or unoffending repartee, he was the very life of their meetings and no party of theirs was ever complete without him. There was, yet, a sterner side to his character—a plucky heart that rose with difficulties, a firm will that no



danger ever staggered, a manly reliance on self that scorned everything that savoured of meanness or dependence. At the early age of eight, when most boys would not dream of parting from their parents for a single night, he cheerfully chose to place between himself and the dear home he loved, a distance of over two hundred miles—a distance traversed by days and days of weary trudging on foot over toilsome tracks (not one of which, except at Kumbhakonam, was then bridged). And in the High School, after a few months of struggling and generous help from his master, he was able, by steady application and earnestness of purpose, to win stipends and prizes and rewards in succession, by which he maintained himself at school and kept his family above want. We can thus trace, in the story of his early life, those germs which sprouting in the congenial soil of poverty and struggle developed into the sterling qualities, which have made of him an eminent public servant, a successful statesman, and a cheerful bearer of every burden that has fallen to his lot in private and social life.



CHAPTER II.

IN A ROVING COMMISSION.

So early as 1846, two years before Sashiah took the Proficient Degree, T. Madhava Rao had written to him from Kumbhakonam :—

“Be pleased to write to me a long letter mentioning what your prospects are, what course you have chalked out for yourself, when you will receive your highest degree, whether you intend venturing into the outstations for employment or look to establishing yourself in some independent position in life, to become a man of profession, to turn an architect, an engineer, a lawyer or a judge.”

On receipt of a reply, Madhava Rao once more writes thus :—

“You tell me that the future with you is involved in clouds and darkness. If I am to form any conjecture respecting what will become of you, I have no fear at all that you will be launched in the wide world without assistance. I am almost sure that you will not be left to the wild directions of chance or the caprice of accidents. On the contrary I imagine you will in all probability be provided for in a far better manner than any of those that have hitherto left the school, excepting the first and the most fortunate—I mean Ranganatham.

You complain of my not giving you an account of my prospects. What more have I to say, my dear Sashiah, what more can I have, unassisted as I am, than that I am endeavouring to get a footing where there is no certain hold. Messrs. Onslow, Cotton and some other gentlemen



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

have expressed their willingness to do something for me when an opportunity occurs. What situation they intend giving me or how far their generosity will range, I cannot determine with any certainty."

Madhava Rao's conjecture was not wrong as far as Sashiah was concerned.

Sashiah waited at the gate of Sir Henry Montgomery, the gentleman who had been so kind to Sashiah when he was a student,—waited for days there and *salaamed* the *Saheb* whenever he drove out or returned from his morning drive or ride. Sir Henry seemed, however, to take little notice of the humble suppliant at his gate for preferment. Sashiah consulted his friend V. Ramiengar, who had been provided through Sir Henry with a place in the Revenue Board, as to the best way of obtaining an interview. V. Ramiengar suggested the sending in of a note. Sashiah took the advice and immediately acted on it. Sir Henry summoned him to his presence. With a cloud in his brow and a preliminary 'hem' that boded no good, Sir Henry, suiting his action to the word, said in Telugu, "*Intakaddu pillagâya mâku zâbu râsêdi*" which meant, "What, such a little boy, daring to address *me* by letter!" Sashiah had broken the *mâmul*; aspirants for an opening had till now waited at the gates and



salamed till the gentlemen should see fit to send for them and make enquiries. Not that English gentlemen in those days were rough mannered and heartless. Far from it, their hearts were full of the milk of human kindness, but they had their lordly ways while concealing a noble and generous heart. Sashiah apologised in due form for his boldness. Sir Henry was pleased and promised help.

Meanwhile Mr. George Norton gave an introduction to Mr. Roupell, Sub-Secretary to the Revenue Board, who, apparently after previous communication, referred Sashiah to Mr. (afterwards Sir) Thomas Pycroft, Secretary to the Board, who gave him the post of an acting clerk in the office. This was in September, 1848.

Sashiah writing to a young graduate in 1896, thus refers to this circumstance :—

“Remember that I began my service on half of Rupees 25 in the same Board Office, though I was covered with academical distinctions. I was asked to join a small office establishment detached from the Board, which had to accompany Mr. (afterwards Sir) Walter Elliot, Senior Board Member of Northern Circars, and I was ready for the journey in twenty-four hours, though my pay was then only Rupees 25 with an allowance of one-third pay for travelling. Of course, times are much changed and graduates nowadays expect more to begin with though the market is glutted with B.A.'s. I say these old stories simply that you may take courage therefrom and not despair.”



After about three months on an acting allowance of Rupees twelve and-a-half, Sashiah was confirmed as a clerk on Rs. 25. It was a modest start in life—humble enough in all conscience for one of his attainments and brilliant academic career.

In those days printing was unknown in office correspondence and copies of all the despatches, proceedings and minutes—as many as were required—had all to be taken by the hand. The Copying Department of the Revenue Board—or as it was then known, the Section Department—was a large establishment with a staff of two hundred clerks with an overseer for every batch of twenty. Many of the clerks were old men with spectacles on nose, men who had grown gray in the service and had no higher ambition than turning out the allotted quantity of copying work within the appointed time. In this branch of work Sashiah was first made to work by the Manager of the office, Mr. J. Maskell, a Eurasian. Sashiah cheerfully accepted the work and was able to put in thrice the quantity required of him. One day Mr. T. Pycroft sent for him and asked him what work he had been put to. Sashiah replied that he was in the Section Department—almost lost sight of in that large body of quill-drivers. The Manager had put him there as, in his



opinion, Sashiah's hand required to be settled! Slow rises merit, by jealousy depressed. But Sashiah was bold and Pycroft could well gauge and appreciate talents, and Sashiah was transferred to the Current Department, where he was trained in drafting correspondence under the immediate supervision of Mr. Pycroft. In this work Sashiah gave the Secretary every satisfaction and the training he received here stood him in good stead in later days. He found time for other work also, and among other things he was entrusted by Mr. Pycroft with preparing an Index to the Circular Orders of the Revenue Board, which Mr. Maskell soon after embodied in a work which he published under the title of "The Circular Orders of the Revenue Board."

There were, at this time, working with him as clerks in the several departments of the Board some of his choicest school-companions—Sadasiva Pillay who rose to be a Sub-Judge in the British Service and afterwards Chief Judge of the Supreme Court of Justice in the State of Travancore, whose life was so pure and saint-like that his closest friends approached him with feelings more akin to reverence than affection—Dinadayalu Naidu, who, in the opinion of Mr. Powell, was out and out the most philosophic intellect in the whole school, but whose career begun in hope



and promise was cut short by mental aberration and a premature death—and V. Ramiengar, who after a varied and uniformly meritorious service in the British Government, closed his public life as Dewan of Travancore; while Madhava Rao, the brightest of a bright set, the favoured child of fortune, gifted with talents of no mean order, with the advantages of high birth and aristocratic connections and blessed, in the course of an exceptionally brilliant career, with rare opportunities for the exercise and effective display of all those qualities which nature had given him and education developed—the future statesman—was at this time a clerk in the Accountant-General's Office not far from the sphere of Sashiah's work, waiting for the turn in the tide which was ere long to carry him to environments more commensurate with his talents.

They were a hopeful set; in the first flush of youth and the consciousness of their potentiality they could see beyond the present into a future more in harmony with their abilities.

Having with quick despatch disposed of their daily task they would meet together in a convenient quarter of the office and discuss local or general news; on these occasions the 'Crescent' that then voiced forth the aspirations of the native community would be brought into requi-



sition and supply them with the pabulum required for their cogitations. In vain would the Manager with his own work in arrears try to repress their youthful ardour and buoyancy by making them work in an adjoining room where he could watch their movements.

Ramiengar was in the Mahratta Cutcherry of the Revenue Board; he induced Sashiah to get himself transferred to the same department and escape from the indignity, as he put it, of serving under an East Indian of poor education. The transfer was accordingly effected through the kindness of Mr. Pycroft, and Sashiah came to work with Ramiengar under the Sheristadar. Kandi Narasinga Rao was at this time the Board Sheristadar, a gentleman of vast experience and famed, despite his ignorance of English, for his intimate acquaintance with the intricacies of revenue administration. The Sheristadar wrote his reviews of the Collectors' *Jamabundy* reports in the Mahratta tongue, and Sashiah as well as Ramiengar had to translate these reports and memoranda into English, an exercise which gave them numerous opportunities of studying the history of revenue administration in the Presidency and prepared them for their future work in the Revenue Department of the Public Service.

The following extract from a letter by



Ramiengar to Sashiah written in 1849, when Sashiah had gone to Vizag, gives us a glimpse of how they spent some of their hours in the Revenue Board:—

“Everything is remarkably quiet and so you are disappointed if you have been expecting much news from me. I am even more barren now than we used to be on some of those occasions in which we used to sit face to face in the Mahratta Cutcherry dunning each other for news.”

In the recess hour between one and two o'clock in the afternoon, set apart for tiffin and a little rest, Sashiah and Madhava Rao would meet, and after partaking of a light refreshment provided by Madhava Rao, they would sit astride a huge cannon which, lying long out of service since the siege of Seringapatam, in a neglected and exposed spot, they had all to themselves, and they would chat away to their heart's content till it was time to rejoin office.

Out of office hours Sashiah had still his tutorial work to attend to, as he was superintending the studies of the sons of Mr. Gundappa. This work like everything else which Sashiah undertook, he did thoroughly and to the satisfaction of his employer. In June 1849 when Madhava Rao was on his way to Travancore to take up the appointment of tutor to the princes, he wrote to Sashiah:—



MAYAVARAM, 6th June, 1849.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I am happy to let you know that I reached this place in safety, after a journey of about ten days during which I suffered severely from the excessive heat of the weather. Hence I intend starting for my destination as early as I can.

When I went to see Mr. Bird, the acting Collector of this District, I paid a visit to M. R. Ry. Gundappa. In the course of the conversation which turned mainly upon topics connected with the High School, he mentioned with high and well-deserved applause and gratitude your valuable services rendered to assist the progress of his sons. Owing to the inconvenience attending your use of the carriage of his children, he intends increasing your remuneration by about Rupees ten, to enable you to keep a separate conveyance for your own use. You may expect from me a pretty long letter from Travancore detailing every circumstance in which you may possibly feel interested.

In the meantime, there seems to be no means of our hearing from each other.

The literary society, of which Sashiah was the soul, was still thriving in a modest way, and on Sundays Powell's boys held their meetings in which papers were read, lectures were delivered and discussions on literary and other subjects were enthusiastically kept up.

In these pursuits and in such society Sashiah's prentice days were passed. In June 1849, he had to bid a long farewell to the scene of his early labors. The Northern Circars were in a bad way. Corruption was rampant. Many of the



native officers were found to be inefficient or dishonest. The Sirkar kist had fallen into arrears. The Collectors were unable to cope with these troubles. Mr. (afterwards Sir) Walter Elliot, Senior Member of the Board, was appointed Special Commissioner for the Northern Circars to correct the evils, and Mr. Rayappa, the Naib-Sheristadar of the Board, was appointed to go with him as his Sheristadar. Sashiah was offered a place in the detached establishment, on Rupees twenty-five and a third of the pay for batta.

Sashiah wanted twenty-four hours to make up his mind. It was a bold step to take; but he was not daunted. He chose to go with the camp. He had however to get his widowed aunt to consent to it; but the poor woman looked aghast at his temerity. She threw up her hands to heaven and exclaimed in despair, "My darling son, (her own son was then a very young boy) what shall I do alone? When shall I see you again? Or shall I see you again?"

Her fears were not wholly without reason. To us who are living in the dawn of the twentieth century, accustomed to do in hours distances that once took as many days, to the comforts of railway locomotion, cheap and far-flashing messages and quarter-anna postage, it will be hard to realise the delays and dangers of travel in the



early "fifties," the weary fasts and vigils, the frequent somersaults in which the rude waggons indulged, the difficulties of communication and adventures with highwaymen and other visitors scarcely more welcome; and it is within the memory of men now living that a pilgrim returned from the sacred shrine of Benares, if perchance he returned, was greeted with an effusion and warmth that would not have been out of place if he had come back from 'that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns.'

To the simple and vaguely informed mind of Sashiah's aunt this northern tour had all the terrors of a *Kāsiyātrā* and an indefinite period of separation; but the daring youth satisfied her with the assurances of a speedy return and the prospects of a speedier advancement. The lady's scruples were overcome and Sashiah started with the camp, taking with him as companion a certain Pichu Aiyer of whom he writes to a correspondent in 1896 :—

"He is about as old as myself, and is perhaps the oldest companion and friend I have living. But you will see that he is of very different make and a wiry old gentleman, still very hale, strong and in possession of all his senses; able to walk any distance, read and write without glasses, and is to all appearance as fit for work as he was ten years ago. I



have known him from the eighth or the ninth year of my age and he afterwards travelled with me to the Northern Circars in the years 1849 to 1851 and he parted only when I settled down as Tahsildar of Masulipatam in 1851."

Sir Walter's camp set out in June 1849. It moved by slow stages along the East Coast staying here a week, there a month, as business and official exigency dictated. It was a moving town—sixty carts of men, twenty of records, camp-followers and their dependants, and *Umedvars*—volunteers who followed the camp on the stray chance of temporary vacancies in the establishment or perquisites from the places passed through.

In this wise the procession slowly moved on. Vizagapatam was to be the Head-quarters of the Commission, and here halts were made for a considerable time, both on the way up and return. So far as personal comforts were concerned, Sashiah had little anxiety. Mr. Rayappa, the Commissioner's Sheristadar, went with wife and children. He was a Telugu Brahman, a gentleman of the old school, with a kind heart and generous impulses, who ran out of his purse as the month ran out of its days, a type of men whom the tendency of new India is fast threatening with extinction. He wished to give his sons a good education in English—no



easy matter in the unsettled life of a peripatetic commission; but fortunately Sashiah was at hand and was requested to do the needful for the boys. Sashiah willingly undertook the responsibility and devoted to this task the hours he could spare after official work. He thus came to be an inmate of Mr. Rayappa's family, sharing the bed and board of the boys. Thus freed from all concern on the score of physical comforts, Sashiah was able to devote his undivided attention to his official duty.

Yet this roving life, with its knocking up, does not appear to have been all that Sashiah had wished. The friends he had left behind admired his pluck but preferred to have him in their midst or, at any rate, in parts more easily accessible. Madhava Rao thus writes to him from Travancore :—

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I have had the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 21st of August last and confess that the news of your journey to such a distant place as Vizagapatam took me by surprise. You seem to have marched away at a very rapid rate; for you appear to have reached your destination even earlier than I arrived at mine. I cannot help admiring your spirit. You have availed yourself of a capital opportunity of advancing your interests and gratifying your curiosity simultaneously. I wish you every success; and hope to hear ere long that you are appointed the Sheristadar of some



District. Although you have chosen to go to a distant province with a view to acquire the favour of Mr. Elliot and to gain a knowledge of more important duties, I should not advise you at all to look for a permanent settlement either at Vizagapatam or any adjacent places. Better it would always be to be poor amidst our friends and relatives and in the congenial atmosphere of our native soil, than enjoy all the pomp of wealth in regions where you look about in vain for any friend to witness your felicity and to be a sharer in your enjoyments.

I am exceedingly obliged to you for the account you have given me of your journey to Vizagapatam and of the curiosities you saw in your way. I wish the account was longer and more ample. Whenever you write to me, write long letters. Never mind the postage.* You should never be parsimonious in gratifying the curiosity of your friends. Let me have regular extracts from your journal. I know you are not such an idle fellow like me as not to write out in a book your every-day doings.

Though Sashiah had a brave heart there were yet moments of depression when he could not but look back on the chosen companions from whose society he had been cut off for an indefinite period, when he had his doubts of the rapid promotion with which he had consoled his forlorn aunt. One or two letters he wrote at this time to his master and friend, Mr. Powell, and that friend of the natives, Mr. George Norton, betray this vacillating mood. They bade him take heart and work on and assured him of the friendly in-

* The days of cheap postage were yet to come.



terest of Mr. Walter Elliot. The following extracts from their letters to Sashiah will show how closely they were watching his career and how ready they were to help him with words of advice and encouragement:—

SUNDAY, 2nd September, 1849.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

.....I was much gratified by the receipt of your letter, with its sketches of the places you passed in your route. I know not whether you have kept a journal of your travel; if you have not, let me recommend you to do so hereafter. At the same time I am well aware that a systematic recording of events is distasteful to a young man. I attempted to keep a diary when I crossed India in 1840, but my laziness caused my plan to be but very incompletely carried out.

I must beg of you not to form a hasty judgment regarding your prospects, and by no means to allow a feeling of dissatisfaction at the slowness of your progress in life to spring up in your breast. *Sacrifice the Present to secure the Future.* I must tell you that Mr. Walter Elliot wrote to me before he left Madras, and in his note he expressed the kindest possible intentions regarding yourself. Recollect this then whenever your mind may happen to feel any uneasiness; and do not hesitate to follow any path which he may chalk out for you, for his aim is to qualify you for a high description of work, and he will doubtless have it in his power to prevent your qualifications being thrown away.

.....I shall be glad to hear from you as often as you can find leisure and inclination to write; but I shall be offended if you pre-pay your letters.

Yours very truly,
E. B. POWELL.



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

26th December, 1849.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

.....I am exceedingly glad that your position is secured notwithstanding, or perhaps I should say in consequence of, the retrenchments ordered by the Supreme Government. I think you may feel quite certain that Mr. Walter Elliot will stand your friend, and that too to some purpose, provided you exert yourself, and prove your possession of industry and talent.

I am writing this at Coromandel, whither I have come to spend the vacation; I expect to pass a tolerably pleasant time with study, shooting (which is decidedly wrong), riding, and boating. While on this subject let me say that I should be glad to know your amusements, and generally the mode in which you spend your time. Have you any sensible, and tolerably well-informed friend with whom you can engage in rational and instructive, as well as amusing, conversation? If you have, you are lucky, and should cultivate him: if you have not, you should endeavour to secure one.

.....
I am, my dear Sashiah,

Yours very truly,

E. B. POWELL.

MADRAS, 1st September, 1849.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I received your letter and that for Mr. J. B. Norton and was very glad to hear of your welfare and favourable progress. Always recollect that the *mere liberty* to be in the service of such a distinguished gentleman as Mr. W. Elliot is a great privilege—one that would be *worth much*, if it was to be *paid for*—while you are remunerated for bestowing your time for your own advantage. If you make the



best use of your opportunities—in sedulously attending to all that Mr. Elliot directs or explains, and to all the duties he requires of you, you will learn those qualifications which will raise you to a high post perhaps eventually and at any rate ensure your profitable employment hereafter. Take care to read all papers, reports, &c., that throw any light on the business you are engaged in—also get all printed reports and books treating of India Revenue matters. Neither neglect your general studies. You will have time for all. We English who pretend to be *anything*, can only succeed by all this—not by mere mechanical drudging but by intelligent application.

Take care to learn all you can of local customs, course of business, habits and ways, among all the people you are with. And act in a *conciliatory* manner with *all* classes. I have not time now to write more.

I am your very faithful friend,
GEO. NORTON.

Mr. Walter Elliot now grew to like Sashiah for his talents and application to work. Mr. Elliot was an ardent antiquarian and every hour he could — snatch from work he devoted to his botanical and archæological researches. In his morning drives he would take Sashiah with him to assist him in collecting botanical specimens, inscriptions, copper-plates and other finds of antiquarian interest. He found an apt pupil in the young clerk.

From Chatterpore, the Head-quarters of the Collector of Ganjam, where they camped for



several weeks, Mr. Elliot with a chosen suite paid a visit to the Maliya country—a hill tract inhabited by the Khonds, and the antiquarian and his disciple made a study of these aborigines, their manners and habits of life. Then they went to Parlakemedi, the largest Zemindari in the Ganjam District, where all the *Bissoyee* chiefs turned out in their full barbaric splendour to pay their respects to the Commissioner, and at his instance Sashiah wrote up a sketch of the origin and history of these chiefs from information gathered on the spot. All this was work more or less of a literary kind and had its own use ; but at the same time his training in official work was not forgotten. Mr. Elliot sent the young man to *paimash* a village, Gona-gadan, near Rajahmundry ; this took a month. At Rajahmundry they collected the statistics bearing on irrigation under the Godavery anicut which had just been completed by Sir Arthur Cotton. Mr. Rayappa wrote an exhaustive and able memorandum on the subject in Telugu ; Sashiah produced an excellent rendering of it in English which drew the warm commendations of Sir Arthur Cotton. Sashiah drew up, himself, a descriptive account of the Kolair lake, its antiquities and its irrigational possibilities and presented it to Sir Arthur who was much pleased with it.



In these and various other ways Sashiah was learning his work. Often would Mr. Elliot ask him to draft official papers from notes and hints which he supplied, and later on when greater confidence could be placed in his own unaided efforts he was required to make original drafts.

In this manner, working and learning he travelled through the Northern Circars. His letters to his friends, Madhava Rao and Ramiengar, describing his travels and the places he saw, must form very interesting reading ; but unfortunately they cannot be recovered. Ramiengar writing to Sashiah at this time says :—

“ I am exceedingly obliged to you for your several notes and for their interesting contents. Your last was from Juggernath, I believe, and while reading that hasty scrap I fancied myself by your side and rowing in the same boat with you on the Chilka. What a pity that I can only fancy and imagine ! ”

There is, however, a very interesting letter written in the vernacular to his aunt, in which he gives an account of a trip he, with some of his friends, took during this period to the sacred shrine of Juggernath. Here is an English rendering of some of the extracts from the letter :—

PULABHADRA (a village near Chicacole),
29th March, 1850.

Your first letter reached me on the evening of the 4th instant. Luckily I reached Chatterpore that noon, from



Juggernath, in time to avail myself of the information contained in the letter. Had I missed a day the *Srāddha*—father's anniversary—would have been lost. Thank God, I was in time. Next morning I came to Purambur where pious and learned Vaidik Brahmans could be had in numbers and there I performed father's annual ceremony in a fitting manner. That very evening I started from the place and came to Kinjilikundam, where Mr. Rayappa joined me. From Balāsa, the next station, Mr. Elliot, Mr. Rayappa and myself—we three alone—had to go out on inspection forty or fifty miles at night on *palanquins* with fresh relays of bearers at every stage. So I left *Pichu* behind to go with the camp to Vizag. Then we three made a circuit of the hills and came to Chicacole on the 15th instant. We stayed there for a week, and yesterday we came to Kalingapatam and last evening Mr. Elliot took ship to Madras on a month's leave. He goes to meet his lady who arrives at Madras in the April steamer and before the leave expires he will join us with his lady at Vizag. We have yet some more villages to go to in these parts and so Mr. Rayappa and myself will move about for a week and then go to Vizag *viā* Srikurma, a sacred shrine. We travel mostly on palanquins with relays of bearers. In this District of Ganjam bearers can be had cheap. My pay barely suffices for my expenses. But I have managed to make both ends meet. *Pichu* is of immense use to me in all ways.

Now about the thread investiture of Krishnaswami. I wish it to go off as grandly as possible. Though I shall not have the fortune to be present on the joyous occasion, still the thought that it went off very well, will be to me a source of infinite joy. I will send Rupees fifty—a month's pay—and I request it may go towards the *tamash* expenses. It does not matter if the expenses on the occasion should go up a



little. The chief thing is that it should be celebrated in a manner worthy of the honoured position held by my late uncle to whom we all owe so much. If only life and fortune are vouchsafed, enough can be earned. So I do not really care much for money. Such happy occasions are few and far between; when they do come, decency, not money, should be the consideration.

My experience in these matters is however *nil*; if I have erred in the views I have set forth above, you two will put your heads together and do as you think fit.

Pichu and myself have been doing well. Wherever I go I am treated with respect and consideration. This is the advantage of a *Sirkar* appointment in the Mofussil. My next elder brother has written to me to say that Mr. Gundappa Roaji will get for me a good place in the Government service if I should go to Tanjore and he will also pay me Rupees thirty from his pocket and that therefore I should take steps to get the thing done. I have however thought about it. It won't do to move in the matter myself. It is time enough to think of it if the offer should come. When I cast my eyes over these wild and desolate regions, my thoughts wistfully run back to Tanjore.

I request you will not stint in help to Mr. Kumaraswami Mudeliar whenever he needs it. He was our first teacher and it is but right we should remember him.

* * * * *

Now for a short account of our trip to Jagannath:—

On the 24th March, at midnight, we started from Chutterpore. We were quite a party.... We hired a few carts, provided them with withy awnings and getting in as best we could, we set off next morning. At about eleven we reached Rambha where we had dinner. We hired there two



boats We shifted our things to the boats and launched into the Chilka lake For the first few yards, the boats were plied with oars, but as we got into deep water, a strong southern breeze set in from the hills and helped us on our northward course. The hills and forests that skirt the lake form an exceedingly picturesque scenery. The boats glided on so smoothly that they seemed to stand still and motionless except when a large wave dashed against them and then they were tossed about and on occasions looked as if they would turn over. But fortunately none of us felt sick. Waterfowls without number rode on the waves and appeared to be enjoying a swing and lots of large-bodied cranes—breast high—met in solemn congregation and held a silent conclave in devout contemplation of the finny tribe. Their saint-like and meditative attitude was a sore trial to one's risible muscles. The moon shone full-orbed in the heavens and the expanse of waters with the moon-light sleeping on it was superbly grand. Big fishes darted up in sport with a flash and as suddenly went down.

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During the rains the boats go up to a village, called Narasimmakadu. But it was spring, we struck sand a league below and had to get down there The way was sandy, the sea-breeze roaring and all night we jogged on suffering and supperless. It must have been four in the morning when we reached Jagannath; but we had no idea of the time and set about preparing supper. When supper was done the first streaks of dawn were visible! We then went to a sacred tank known as Mārkaṇḍéya *tīrtha* and bathed. We then got hold of a cicerone—these guides are called Pandīas here—to show us over the temple and started to the shrine. It was the time of a festival—the *dola Purnami*—and crowds of people thronged all the streets.



When we reached the entrance of the temple, ten of our stoutest men formed a cordon by linking their arms, within which the ladies of our party were safely accommodated, and our guide—singularly strong of limb—forced a way through the surging crowd and brought us to the Holy Presence. Access to the innermost shrine is barred by two poles fixed across the gateway. So we paid our adorations to the Deity from this side the bars. We then returned home. We paid Rupees four for the *Bhoga*—the food offering to the Deity. This is prepared by Uriya Brahmans. At five in the evening a few plates of the offering were sent to us; we found them excellent dishes. They were brought by *barbers*! These are the professional dish-bearers attached to the temple. While the offerings are placed before the Deity these barbers, two or three hundreds of them, are ready with baskets, and as soon as the service is over they are sent off with the remains to their several destinations. Within the precincts of the temple no defilement attaches to contact with lower orders of people and to touching or eating cooked food. Hundreds receive doles of food offering in earthen pots, bolt them down off-hand, throw the pots aside, wipe their hands with their garments and coolly walk off! Some people not provided with the luxury of pots open their mouths wide, and the *Pandfa* throws a ball of the offering into their mouths—a summary method of disposing the sacrament.

The temple is of huge dimensions and the tower is high enough. The stone-work and carving are of exquisite workmanship. We cannot see the like of it anywhere down south. The gods in the holy of holies are three images of wood—that of Jagannath in the middle, of Subhadra on one side and Balarama on the other. They are renewed once in twelve years; but they receive fresh paint annually.



Nothing like a standing car. One is improvised for the occasion; soon after the festival, the car is pulled to pieces and the wood is sold to the highest bidders and generally utilised for burning the dead. The canvas cloth used for the decoration of the car is torn into small pieces which the Pandits offer to the pilgrims as sacred relics.

The temple kitchen is a spacious structure with walls of granite and roofed over with thatch for the easy escape of smoke. There are from two to three hundred stoves, each with ten or fifteen ovens—every one of them busily engaged day and night. Wealthy pilgrims give orders for grand *Bhoga* offerings to the Deity, offerings of dainty dishes, the richest viands, and the highest efforts of the gastronomic art; the cost of the orders ranging from Rupees five hundred to two thousand. Every variety of confectionery and cakes is prepared here and offered to the God and then offered for sale, and those who cannot afford to order a separate *Bhoga* on their own account go in for these. We came under the latter category.

Next evening we had a nearer view of the Holy Presence. I made an offering of one Rupee at the sacred footstool. So did the rest of us. We stayed a day more. We set out on our return at 12 P.M., Thursday.

To sum up the results of the pilgrimage :—

1. Our morning and evening prayers had often to shift for themselves.

2. Forced fasts and vigils.

3. Late meals and bad food when they could be had and dysentery and diarrhoea of which we had, every one of us, our share."

* * * * *



Two years of this wandering life and varied experience served to bring out his capacity for work and endurance. He had become by this time the right-hand man of Mr. Elliot. His pay had been raised to Rupees thirty-five and later on to Rupees fifty. Trained under the immediate eye of Mr. Elliot, he had acquired correct notions of revenue work and confidence in his own powers. He had had enough of knocking about and was eager for a spell of quiet settled life. Besides, his wife would be shortly coming of age and it was time for him to think of keeping house and giving up his bachelor ways; and he was on the look out for a fitting opportunity. He had not to wait long.

About May, 1851, the Commission came to Masulipatam. The administrative machinery of the District was out of gear. Taluq after taluq was inspected. Many of the Tahsildars and Deputy Tahsildars were found weak or corrupt. A few were suspended pending trial. Among them was the Tahsildar of Masulipatam or Bunder. Bunder was at this time notorious for *budmashes* and rowdy characters and the Collector, Mr. R. T. Porter, was on the look out for a competent hand—one who could restore peace and order out of the chaos. He spoke to Mr. Elliot on the subject; the Commissioner recommended Sashiah



for the place and sent him with a note to the Collector. Mr. Porter saw the applicant in person and was generally satisfied with him. But Sashiah appeared to be so young—he was barely twenty-three—and could he manage such a notoriously troublesome taluq? The youthful aspirant, like one far greater before him, replied in a respectful tone that youth, if a fault, was one that would wear away with time, that with the Collector to back him up and gently guide him when he went wrong, he could confidently take charge of more than one taluq like the one in question. Mr. Porter was pleased with Sashiah's manly bearing and pleasing address, and at the close of the interview wrote and signed the order of appointment and sent him back with these words :—

“Young man, when an hour back you entered this room you were an ordinary clerk. You now go a Tahsildar—the responsible wielder of the destinies of a taluq. I hope you will justify my choice.”

Sashiah thanked him for his kindness and promised to do his best. That very evening he took charge.



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CHAPTER III.

IN MASULIPATAM.

Mr. George Norton who heard from Sashiah of his rapid promotion to the dignity of a Tahsildar wrote back expressing his gratification on receipt of the welcome intelligence and giving him excellent advice:—

MADRAS, 23rd June, 1851.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I am most gratified to hear that your generous patron has so soon provided you with so eminent a post. See what comes of confidence in worthy and influential men and from scorning that mean avidity for small present gains, which has been the bane of several of your brethren of the High School.

And now high fortunes are before you, if you are firm to your good principles and resist all temptations to deviate from the path of rectitude and duty. Bad examples and habits of fraud and speculation will be before and around you on all sides. Your elevation—the public esteem—will depend on whether you prove yourself above those allurements.

You are young—recollect that—and be not conceited, or imperious to others nor undervalue them. But be *reserved* in matters of business—however affable in other matters, and polite in all matters. Let people know you more by your acts than your talk. Make a point of thoroughly understanding all your business in every detail—but be not *forward* in showing that you understand it. In all you write,



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

or report, or communicate with your superiors, be *sure of your fact* and don't *accuse*, nor suggest on mere surmises. I need not exhort you generally to exert yourself in promotion of education. I do not think you will descend to the level of some who, owing *everything* to what others have done for them, in supplying them with a superior education, are satisfied to enjoy the fruits in ungrateful idleness.

Be assured of my regard. I shall always be glad to hear from you, and believe me faithfully yours

GEO. NORTON.

Congratulations also poured in from his school friends. A few of these are worth perusal. Dinadayalu, to whom reference has been made in the previous chapter, writes :—

“ Mighty changes have come upon your prospects. You have been duly rewarded for the tiresome travels, face-blakening survey and the monotonous drudgery at the desk which you described in your last note to me. I have heard that you but very lately got an increase of 10 Rupees to your salary—and may I tell you that you seem to have a hold on the mind of Mr. Elliot who, I hear, has told Mr. Cunliff that you accepted your present post not from the love of lucre or the emoluments of the office, but to show what great improvements could be effected by an intelligent and honest Tahsildar ”

And V. Ramiengar, who was now Head Munshee of the Collectorate of Nellore, thus expresses himself :—

“ My congratulations on your promotion are not the less warm for coming so late. I was quite prepared for some



such news from you and your appointment by no means surprised me. I am now anxious to hear how you get on, for you must find yourself in a dreadfully strange position. It is commonly believed that an honest, upright, kind-hearted man can never make a good Tahsildar. Whatever may be your opinion on the subject, the Tahsildars around me in this District help to confirm me in the belief. The greatest rogues pass off for the cleverest and honestest of men and really sensible and straightforward people for the veriest dunces. Pray tell me how you get on."

ful?
Fifty years ago the Tahsildar was a far more important person than his lineal representative of to-day. Within the limits of his authority he was regarded as a god. Men approached him with awe. If he went out on circuit, the people of the place he went to turned out in a respectable body to receive him in a fitting manner. If he appeared in the streets, men bent their heads low and made a profound obeisance. In the day-time he generally kept at home and attended to such official work as was brought to his notice by his confidential clerks. In the evening he went to the office to hold Court. The premises of the office would then be thronged with clients, petitioners, and *chaprasssees* with huge turbans and glittering *dawalīs*. At sight of the magnate, the crowd made way with bated breath and respectful *salaam*. He passed in scarcely noticing the worshipping multitude and sat in a



dignified attitude on a carpet seat, reclining gracefully on a cushioned support. In two rows in front of him were seated the clerks on mats spread on the ground; before them were low desks on which were bundles of papers with which their goose quills were busy at work.

Then the Court began with the imposing ceremony of *torch-light salaam*. This institution was the prerogative of kings and others high in power—a sort of Carnatic *darbar* held every evening. The servants and peons, the *duffadar* with the broad-brimmed head-gear—in fact all the lower ranks of the establishment with their distinctive badges—stood in respectful array to do honour to the presiding deity. The hall was in a blaze of light with torches which the torch-bearers held in their right hand and kept alive with pretty frequent supplies of oil from a handy oil-can they held in their left. Then the servants bent low to the earth, touched the ground with their right fingers and made a most submissive *salaam* hailing the Chief in one acclamation—‘Jai Maharâj’—‘Victory to the king of kings.’

This programme was the humblest of the kind. It was much grander with Rajas, Chieftains and heads of Mutts, who maintained all the paraphernalia of royalty. The band of native music struck up. Bards and eulogists sung forth, each



in his own style but all simultaneously, the praises of the Chief and the glories of his race. Bearers of silver and gold sticks surmounted with the family crest recited in a loud, if with a not very musical, voice the achievements of the line. The dancing-horse, glittering with bright tassels and other decorations, went through an elegant course of pace. The richly caparisoned elephant bent its trunk in a saluting curve and offered its greetings in a subdued roar. And the lovely nautch-girl, attired in richly embroidered robes and dazzling jewels, performed with graceful movements a minuet to the pipe behind.

Of course the Tahsildar could not afford all this grandeur. But none the less the ceremony was gone through and the Tahsildar kept up his dignity with equal regularity, if with far less display. After this opening formality, regular work commenced. Cases began to be heard, the parties were summoned in by the monotonous tones of the *duffadar*, witnesses were sworn by the clerks and depositions taken; and the whole Court was a scene of confused bustle and a babel of tongues. Drafts and correspondence, affidavits and petitions for disposal were placed in endless succession for the signature of the Tahsildar, who had at the same time to note the evidence, examine the parties and enquire into petitions.



It is no wonder then that in this turmoil and simultaneous calls on his attention the Tahsildar felt bewildered and left the kernel to the managing clerks while he retained—for he must maintain his prestige—the shell of power; and the flattering and obsequious *gumastahs* made secret understandings with the parties that came for justice (or for defeating its ends) and managed things in their own way, though they took care to leave the Tahsildar in the delusion that it was *he* that did everything. The Tahsildar too, if blessed with an elastic conscience, acquiesced in the arrangement which contributed in an equal degree to his peace of mind and the lining of his purse.

Sashiah saw how things stood and set himself to mending matters. He saw that so long as the office was held at night and all important office work was conducted by lamp light a long tether was given to the itching propensities of the clerks. The parties also were put to great suffering. The first thing he did was, therefore, to hold Court during the day. The clerks were disposed to look upon the innovation as an infringement of their vested interests; but they saw they had to do with a clear-sighted and resolute superior and they adjusted themselves, as best they could, to the new condition of things. The people hailed



the change as a god-send. Another thing he did was to take down depositions with his own hand in English and check those taken by the clerks in the *vernacular*. This was another blow to them. They could no longer fit in the evidence to their pre-arranged conclusions or improve on it as they thought fit ; and the flood-gates of corruption were thus shut up once for all.

He did not give up the pageant of the torch-light *salaam*. Only instead of inaugurating the day's proceedings it now ended them. True, it was a relic of oriental pomposity ; but it would not do to abruptly disturb the time-honoured associations of the people with the prestige of the office, and with true insight he thought he might humour the harmless prejudices of the people and press 'dignity' in the service of 'efficiency.' And the young Tahsildar—a Tahsildar at 23 was a phenomenon in those days—carried himself so well in the traditions of the office that the public exclaimed in well-pleased accents, "How glorious is the Court of the youthful Tahsildar ? It is like the *darbar* of the celestials !"

It was the year of the Great Exhibition in the Crystal Palace, and Sashiah appropriately commenced his *regimé* with a loyal tribute to Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. All parts of India vied with one another in



contributing their quota to the success of the Exhibition initiated by Prince Albert, and Masulipatam busied herself to send her mite. In her palmiest days Masulipatam was famed for her skill in cotton fabrics. Weavers and dyers formed a large portion of her inhabitants, as they do still. She stood without a rival in the arts of weaving, printing, bleaching, washing and dressing cloths. Her chintzes had a great reputation for the freshness and permanency of their dyes; the colours became after washing brighter than before. Muslins and chintzes, calicos, *madapollams*, tartans, gingham, towels and table-linen—all of very superior style—were turned out from her looms and catered to the artistic demands of wealth and luxury at home and abroad. The excellence of her manufactures attracted early European settlers and the Dutch, the English and the French established their earliest factories here. The name *Muslin* is held by some, who do not pin their faith to Marco Polo, to owe its origin to the birth-place of the manufacture—Masula—an abbreviated form of Masulipatam.*

* Says Marco Polo, "At *Mosul* (in Turkish Asia) all the cloths of gold and silk that are called *Mosulins* are made." The Edinburgh Review rushed from this to the conclusion that this statement of Marco Polo was proof that *Muslin* had a very different meaning from what it has now. It is unnecessary, in the face of a more natural derivation, to presume any such transition in the signification of the word. But we forget that philologists and lexicographers have endorsed and given currency to the error.



At any rate the word *Mull*, denoting a superior cotton fabric, is doubtless derived from *Mullavole*, a large village near Masulipatam, where it was first woven; and *calico*, presumed by etymologists to have taken its name from *Calicut* whence it was exported, is believed by the more knowing to be a corruption of *Calam kâri*—*calam* signifying the *reed pen* used in calico print.

But the fair name of Masulipatam rested not on the slender foundations of philological caprice. Her own products—fabrics of exquisite workmanship—spread her fame far and wide.

The days of her glory are gone. Her manufactures and trade have decayed. Manchester has swallowed up her industries; the power-loom has rung the knell of the hand-loom. Art has died and given place to Philistinism; and unlike the wealthy nobles and rulers of the land who munificently patronised indigenous art, not from necessity alone but out of genuine love and a sense of duty, their descendents ignore tastes and traditions alike and dismiss all such considerations as sentiment.

In 1851 Masulipatam had not lost all traces of her splendour and she gathered up her skirts to make a fitting offering to her Sovereign Queen. A Committee was organised for the purpose with Sashiah as its guiding spirit; the weavers of the



town were set to work and a *palang-posh* (meaning *bed-cover*)—the best piece of calico-printing known for a hundred years—was prepared and sent, with other specimens of local art, to the Exhibition and for the gracious acceptance of Her Majesty. Warm acknowledgments with medals and other tokens of commendation were received in due course and sent a flutter through the heart of the expiring art. To Sashiah such a happy commencement of his Tahsildarship appeared both graceful and auspicious.

The first thing to engage his attention after the reforms in the office was the question of public security. For some time past there had been frequent cases of burglary in the town—more than two hundred of them. Not a day passed but one house or another was broken into. There was, evidently, an organised gang of burglars and it was correctly surmised that there were some in the town who supplied the gang with the necessary information and who had a finger in the pie. The people were alarmed. Sashiah was sorely exercised. He was, by virtue of his place, the head of the police; and it behoved him to trace the burglaries and bring the authors to book. A few suspected characters were caught hold of and their houses searched; but nothing could be found. Sashiah never let



the matter drop from his mind. By persistent effort he succeeded in getting a clue. A Brahman copyist in his own office—an astute old fox with a veneer of respectability—was in league with the villains and regularly received the stolen property and found means of disposing of it long after the suspicions were lulled and far away from the scene of their labours. Sashiah was a good judge of character and was able to see through the man. He pounced upon the hardened sinner one morning when he least expected such a clap. A thorough search was instituted; Sashiah himself was on the spot and hundreds of things were ferreted out—women's clothes, plates and trinkets—quite a cart-load of them. The whole town gathered on the premises and were busy identifying their long-lost things with unspeakable joy in their eyes. A preliminary enquiry was made and through this wretched agent, the gang were traced to their lair and the whole party were committed to the Sessions. There they received their deserts. Burglary thus came to be a thing of the past and the new head of police came to be the talk of the day.

Another piece of work that fell to him at this time deserves mention here, as illustrating his tact and ability to cope with an emergency. The Muhammadans of Masulipatam (or Bunder) were



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

numerically strong and not over-solicitous to abide by the law of the land. There were two factions of them between whom no love was lost. A long-standing and bitter dispute between them as to the right of precedence in religious processions had gone up to the Sudder Adawlut Court of Justice and decision had been given against the party that, by the logic of superior physical force, had long been exercising the right. The festival of Mohorrum was at hand, and the Tahsildar was entrusted with the duty of seeing that it went off without a hitch and the party in whose favour the Court had decided had their long withheld rights secured to them, if possible without an appeal to soldiery. It was a delicate commission to execute. On the day of the procession the more powerful, though the less rightful, party mustered strongly, took earlier possession of the field and with set faces and a threatening look and with drawn swords in their hands took a determined stand in the first ranks of the procession, that is, immediately in front of the Bârâ Imâm that headed the solemn train in a gorgeous sedan. The head of police had taken the necessary precautions and could, if necessary, appeal to the force of arms ; but before resorting to this extreme resource, he tried to see what more conciliatory methods could effect.



He accordingly pointed out to the aggressors the value of obedience to the orders of the Government ; but they would not budge an inch. He then quietly and secretly took the chief *moulvis* and priests into confidence and by fair words firmly spoken secured their co-operation. On his representation the sedan-bearers silently and imperceptibly drew back with the sedan, and a small space was cleared between the sedan and the aggressive party, who were looking *forward* for any signs of opposition. The more influential representatives of the rightful section were, by means of a preconcerted understanding, brought together without exciting much suspicion and accommodated in the intervening space. The procession was thus smoothly formed and the Tahsildar gave the order for the train to move on. “ *Chalo* ” he said in a firm tone, and briefly addressing the armed sepoys whom he had ostentatiously caused to be paraded in the foreground he ordered them to fire on the least symptom of disturbance. The mutinous faction, thus outwitted and cowed, sullenly moved on. The determined front of the young Tahsildar had carried the day. The myrmidons of law were ordered to walk up and down the streets all night without intermission ; and the Tahsildar himself held Court all night with more than the usual display



but the day—rather the night—passed off quietly, without any further necessity for his interference.

In 1852 Sashiah took the census of the town of Masulipatam—a self-imposed task. It was altogether a new idea at the time. It was only in 1867, sixteen years after the notion had suggested itself to Sashiah and been immediately acted on by him, that the Government of India first instituted a census of the several Provinces. Sashiah's heart was set on improving the moral tone of the town ; he thought of it day and night and his busy brain was for some days devising ways and means and it struck him that if he had for his guidance some statistics with regard to the several families in the town, their numerical strength, occupation, means and sources of livelihood, he might hit upon some definite procedure. He had of course read of such statistics being collected in Europe and America and he resolved to try the experiment within his jurisdiction.

He accordingly put some of his men to this work. The progress, however, was slow and the results, such as had been achieved, could not be very well relied on. The people were not over-zealous to be counted and marked.

Indians are essentially conservative. Depar-



tures from *mamul*, the most evidently reasonable, are looked upon with distrust and suspicion. This particular movement had, besides, an ugly look about it in the eyes of the people. In the first place it was a *Sircar* arrangement set on foot by a *Government officer*. Who knew but the inspiration came from higher sources? What could it mean but an attempt to throw some additional burden on the people?—a poll-tax in all probability? The wiseacres of the bazaar gravely shook their heads and hinted that it could bode no good. And then, the idea of drawing the ladies from their seclusion and putting on record their names and their age! Again could such a boastful display of their plentiful progeny, their wealth and all, be acceptable in the eyes of God? Was it not a flying in the face of Providence? Was it not inviting the wrath of God on their vainglory?

Sashiah accurately gauged the feelings of the people; he went in person among them and assured them, with the charm of manner peculiar to him, that no harm was meant. But they had their own misgivings and could not be brought to supply correct accounts. Sashiah went from house to house and took the enumeration himself. The *Komattis* in special brought their hereditary dodges into play. One of them had omitted to



mention a child of his ; the omission was detected and the man was questioned. "What ! Sir," he exclaimed in surprise and with vehement gesticulation, "it is a child but a year old. To think of including such an *innocent* little thing in the catalogue, such a tender chicken—a perfect stranger to the sins of this earth ! It has done nothing to be treated thus." Another had artfully contrived to send a few members of the family out of the house ; when the thing was found out he said, "To be sure, Sir, you don't mean to include even those who are absent from home. They are *not* in. You may search the house through, Sir, and satisfy yourself if necessary. It is hardly fair to put in even the absentees." A *mochee*, pen-mender of his own office, could not persuade himself to give the number or the names of the women in his household. It was not chivalric, he held, to bring the fair sex into the book and record their ways. Sashiah could thoroughly appreciate the humours of the situation. Without resorting to threats or severe methods he cleverly played off the neighbours one against another. However reluctant to speak of themselves and their family, the people suddenly discovered a zeal for veracity when the interests of the neighbours were concerned. The results of the operation were thus easily



checked and verified. Sashiah drew up, for his own benefit, a clear and analytical report on the statistics thus collected and was enabled, in future, if anything happened out of the way, to lay his finger on the sore spot and devise a speedy remedy.

In one short year Sashiah had done much for the town; corruption in the office had been put down; public security had been restored; by personal supervision he had checked the abuses that were going on in the salt pans; while assiduously guarding the interests of the Government he had at the same time made himself popular with all classes of people and earned a name for unswerving rectitude. The Collector, now Mr. T. D. Lushington, had a high opinion of his character and abilities, as the following extract from a letter by V. Ramiengar from Nellore shows:—

“.....I was certainly not prepared to see you away from your regular post, and making Jamabundy at Nundegamah. The fact shows the estimation in which you are held and I hope to see you soon bear the more euphonious appellation of “Native Collector” as Sheristedars are termed by a recent circular from the Board.”

Well might Ramiengar speak of the incident in this commendatory strain. *Jamabundy* in



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

those days was more arduous and taxing than it now is. It is during *Jamabundy* that ryots and land-holders settle their dues to the Government, have their titles renewed and bring their grievances of the year for redress. The Civilians of those days—they were Haileybury men—were kind-hearted and sympathetic, having lived long enough in the District to know the people and their ways and took an almost paternal interest in the welfare of those entrusted to their charge; they were personally acquainted with the more influential of the people and had evidently more faith in patriarchal authority than in Government by red-tape. During the tour of *Jamabundy* the people came face to face with him and spoke to him of their wants and requests. Their tales were heard with patience and even indulgence and such redress as was deemed just and feasible was given and the satisfied parties received *pan supari** from the *Sircar* and retired in peace and contentment. If they felt aggrieved and thought that justice had not been done them, they refused to receive the *pan supari*; then the authorities had tough work to do. The test of a successful *Jamabundy* lay in the *pattadars* honour-

* *Pansupari* in Hindustani means 'betel-nut' which is given to the guests on every festive occasion among Hindus and Mussalmans.



ing without exception the *Sircar* present of *pan*. The grumblers had to be conciliated ; arguments and persuasive methods were adopted ; and concessions were, if necessary, granted and a concordat was ultimately arrived at. Then the *pan supari* came once more into request and sealed the reconciliation. All this required much delicacy and tact, and a Tahsildar who was entrusted with this responsible work and passed through the ordeal unscathed might well be considered to have added a feather to his cap.

Another event that took place about this time also bears testimony to the confidence reposed in him by the Collector. About the close of 1851 Mr. E. W. Bird, Head Assistant Collector of Nellore, was appointed Special Assistant to Masulipatam to try cases under Regulation IX of 1822, the materials for which had been collected by Mr. Walter Elliot, Commissioner.

In 1852, Mr. Bird wound up his special work and sent in an elaborate report to the Collector, and Sashiah's services were required by the Collector who had to deal with the report and decide the destinies of the delinquents. This was work of a confidential nature and it is needless to state that Sashiah acquitted himself in the task with his usual zeal, and the opportunity thus afforded of coming in close contact with Mr. Lushington



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

enabled him to make a very favourable impression on the Collector's mind.

In 1853, Sashiah was deputed on special duty under the Head Assistant Collector. This occupied him for the greater part of the year. Petitions and appeals that had been for some years past presented to the Collector lay in the office undisposed of. It was not however through any fault of the presiding officer. Mr. Lushington and Mr. Porter before him had both to work almost single-handed. They had no trusted native lieutenants; the Cutchery was inefficiently officered. With the most strenuous efforts they could hardly keep pace with the work thrown on their hands. Arrears accumulated with years and presented a formidable pile of paper bundles—appeals and petitions. The bundles had latterly developed a vigorous tendency to multiply. They were an eye-sore—a standing—rather growing—reproach unpleasantly reminding the Collector of duties unfulfilled. Mr. Lushington often thought of it—one cannot be sure that he did not dream of it—and at last found a way out of the difficulty. There was Mr. Holloway, the new Head Assistant Collector, an officer even then reputed to be of exceptional abilities and capacity for work—who is still remembered as one of the most



brilliant Judges of the High Court of Madras. Mr. Lushington had the bundles packed up securely, transferred them to a cart, where they were not lodged without some pressure, and despatched them under the custody of an office-clerk to the Head Assistant. The huge pile with the custodian safely reached the destination. It was enough to stagger any one less resourceful ; but Mr. Holloway received the commission with a grim smile of welcome ; he wrote to the Collector for the services of a competent assistant, and Sashiah was placed for an indefinite period at his disposal. Then the formidable bundles were tackled and subjected by Sashiah to a preliminary operation of sifting. Paper after paper was gone through and docketed ; the subject of each petition succinctly set forth in a register ; frivolous appeals and petitions were separated from the more important ; some of the petitioners had died ; others had waited and given up all hopes of being heard or getting justice ; others had thought better of their requests and never turned up in answer to the summons ; a few claims had lapsed and others had been barred in other ways ; many of the petitions were magisterial complaints sent by post and hence not worthy of acceptance. But even worthless cases required scrutiny before they could



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

be set aside. Then the cases that remained were gone into by the Head Assistant who heard such parties as presented themselves and meted out such justice as the requirements of each case demanded. The rejected petitions still lay in the office rooms—a heavy encumbrance. The clerk in charge offered to take them back to the Collector and free himself of his responsibility. But Mr. Holloway thought otherwise; he made a pile of them all and committed them, in the presence of Sashiah and the clerk, to the tender mercies of fire. The flames leaped up and crackled and threw out their shining tongues in evident relish of the oblation, and in a few moments nothing was left of the huge mass except a few handfuls of ashes. The clerk in charge who had formed no idea of such a summary disposal was frightened out of his wits; with a vacant and scared look he witnessed the destructive proceedings. His looks expressed a silent protest, but he was terribly afraid of the strong-willed Head Assistant; he wrung his hands and sent up a mute appeal to Sashiah. How was he to account to the Collector for the bundles that had been entrusted to his care? Then Mr. Holloway drew up a short report of how he had disposed of the papers, absolving the clerk of all share in the final proceedings and sent him back with the



assurance of security. 'Holloway's disposal of post petitions' has passed into a proverb.

Early in 1853 Sashiah's wife was ready to join him and he accordingly went down to Madras and took her to Masulipatam. Already he had made a name for intellectual and moral worth of a high order and the name had passed beyond the narrow limits of his District and reached the influential circles at the Presidency town, and Mr. T. Pycroft, now Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras, was eager to avail himself of the services of such a capable officer. It is to this circumstance that Mr. G. Norton alludes in his letter to Sashiah on the eve of his final departure to his native shores:—

AT SEA, 12th March, 1853.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I was unable to answer your affectionate letter when I received it—being so overwhelmed by the bustle of my final leave of India and of parting with so many friends. No expression of the esteem which has reached me from the natives at large or from any class has touched my heart more forcibly than yours and a few others from Proficients of a similar tenor. You have always had a prominent place in my regard and I know you will always keep it. Proceed only, and persevere, in your present principles, and you will be an honour to the school, and I trust to the community also, and certainly to your family and friends. Already your reputation not only for intellectual eminence, but also



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

for undeviating integrity and honourable feelings, has earned a desire in influential quarters to forward you in life and raise you to distinction. You probably, therefore, will soon find yourself at Madras. If so, join a noble band of your fellow-countrymen in their labours of social advancement and reforms. Exert your utmost influence to preserve union among them. Protect my good name and give the fullest honour to those who surpass my efforts in success, though not in zeal. Remember too that while I yet live, I desire to prove the native's friend by any services yet in my power to render them.

And lastly believe me ever,

Your attached friend,

GEO. NORTON.

Mr. Pycroft offered him a place in the Government office and wrote to him to start at once and take up the appointment; but Sashiah could be ill-spared from the District just then; the petition work had been entrusted to him and he had to bring it to a satisfactory close before he could think of joining his new duty. Mr. Pycroft allowed him a few months to finish this work; meanwhile he would keep the place reserved for him. Nothing could be kinder. Sashiah worked double tides to wind up his engagement and about the end of the year he hoped to have done with it and leave for Madras.

Mr. Lushington, however, was unwilling to lose his services and accordingly wrote to Mr. Pycroft. Mr. Pycroft wrote back to Sashiah :—



“Mr. Lushington wrote to me a few days since, expressing his wish to retain you in his District, but I told him in reply that however much I might regret putting him to inconvenience, I could not forego your services in the Government office.

I shall therefore still hope to see you at Madras by Christmas.”

Between Mr. Lushington, who would not part with him, and Mr. Pycroft who would not release him from the engagement, Sashiah was in a dilemma. Seldom has recognition that comes to unaided merit placed any one in more delicate circumstances. Sashiah wrote to Mr. Elliot for advice; the Commissioner for the Northern Circars counselled him to stick to Masulipatam. Sashiah wrote back to Mr. Pycroft and referred to the views of Mr. Elliot. But Mr. Pycroft was inexorable; he expressed his sentiments to Sashiah in the following letter :—

MADRAS, *February 1st*, 1854.

SASHIAH,

I received yesterday your letter of the 26th ultimo. I cannot enter upon a review of Mr. Elliot's observations to you as to your remaining at Masulipatam. I can only say generally that with every respect to Mr. Elliot's views I cannot share in them. I do not consider you at all bound to continue at Bunder—indeed the obligation, in my judgment, is just the other way and after the length of time that you have, with the full knowledge of your immediate superior Mr. Lushington, been under an engagement to join the



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

Government office and the arrangements that I have made from time to time for giving Mr. Lushington the benefit of your services as long as possible, it is incumbent on you to come down here—unless I see fit to give you up—and this, much as I may regret the inconvenience that I may occasion, I cannot consent to do.

You must however judge for yourself. I shall not blame you for any decision at which you may arrive, for I shall be sure that it has been conscientiously formed—but my opinion and wishes are as I have above stated.

Your friend,

T. PYCROFT.

Mr. Lushington solved the difficulty by offering Sashiah the place of Naib Sheristedar, which, at this time, fell vacant.

In offering the appointment, Mr. Lushington wrote:—

“.....I now offer to you the appointment of Naib Sheristedar, believing that from your qualifications you are in every way well fitted for the office.

.....This offer is made to you with the entire approbation of the Commissioner, who at considerable inconvenience to himself originally allowed you to leave his office to become Tahsildar of Masulipatam—both because he knew that a Tahsildarship was the best opening for your future advancement, and because in the utterly demoralized state of the Public Service in this District, he hoped to introduce a man of a different stamp, whose abilities, education and moral principles would alike command respect.

Now that the dismissal of the late Head Sheristedar has been ordered, the reformation of matters in this District



must commence. If you accept this office, a wide field of usefulness and for achieving distinction is thrown open to you at an unusually early age, and I feel that your services will be of very great importance to the administration of affairs in this District.

I make you the offer in the same spirit in which the Commissioner promoted your transfer from his office—believing that your acceptance of it will be beneficial both to yourself and to the Public Service and hoping that it will be in your power at once to accept it.

Apart from the prospective advantages which a Sheristadarship obtained at an early period of life holds out, I would mention that I hope in the revised Moyenzabitah* of this District to secure an increase in the salary attaching to the office of Naib-Sheristadar."

With such a tempting offer (the new place carried a salary of Rs. 175, *i.e.*, Rs. 75 over his pay as Tahsildar and a promise of increase, besides being the immediate stepping stone to the Head Sheristadarship), the balance of his inclinations leant on the side of Masulipatam. Sashiah placed the whole matter before Mr. Pycroft and expressed his readiness to be entirely guided by him, though he respectfully begged permission to indicate which way his own inclinations lay. Mr. Pycroft wrote back in reply :—

* Civil List.



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

MADRAS, February 7th, 1854.

SASHIAH,

Your letter of the 31st ultimo has just reached me. After what you say in it I would not wish to prevent your accepting the Naib-Sheristadarship however much I may regret to lose you for my own office. I trust that you will like your new honourable and important post. That you will do credit to it I do not *trust* as I feel *quite certain* that you *will*.

Your friend,
T. PYCROFT.

The problem was thus satisfactorily solved and he accepted the offer of Mr. Lushington, who, in appointing him to the place, wrote :—

AMARAVATHY SASHIAH,

You are well aware of all that has occurred in this District, since you entered it in 1851 as a subordinate in the establishment of the Commissioner, and of the result of the investigations which have led to the dismissal and punishment of so many of the old Public Servants of all ranks commencing with the corrupt Head Sheristadar,—Ramanuja Row—and no further allusion to them appears necessary on the present occasion.

When the Commissioner became aware of the utterly demoralized state of the native Public Service in this District, he recommended you for the office of Tahsildar of Masulipatam, because he hoped that while your ability and education rendered you well calculated to fill such an appointment at an unusually early age, you would bring to the discharge of your duties the more rare qualification of integrity and elevated principles. The appointment was intended both to advance the public good and your own interests and to show the effect of the education which you had received.



In the higher appointment now conferred on you by me, with the entire approval of the Commissioner, you will have a wider field for the exhibition of your abilities and qualifications, and I trust that you will by your conduct ever show to your countrymen that among the fruits of the excellent education imparted to you at the Madras University, you have brought the rare virtue of high integrity, abhorrence of all malversation and dishonesty ; and a determination not only to be pure yourself, but to check and denounce the misconduct of all others, placed in subordinate positions in the Masulipatam District, whoever they may be.

* * * * *

He was Naib-Sheristadar for barely a year. Though he was now in a place which carried greater dignity and higher emoluments, his work was comparatively lighter ; but he could never sit idle and take his ease ; work, work that required intelligence and a firm will, was his element and he must be improving himself or those about him. The diary which he was regularly keeping at this period records, one day like another, a continuous round of work from 7 A.M. to 9 or 10 P.M.

He had established, when he settled as Tahsil-dar, a Debating Society at Masulipatam. The Reading Club at Madras, of which he had been the Secretary, was, as he learnt, yet thriving well and doing useful work. One of his friends and school-mates—V. Sivadagopacharlu, who



afterwards became a distinguished Vakil and member of the Madras Legislative Council—wrote to Sashiah in one of his letters :—

“ *Your Reading Club is going on as usual. The resident Proficients have three or four months ago formed themselves into a class for studying Shakespeare, &c., under Mr. Powell. We are to meet once a fortnight. We went through ‘The Merry Wives of Windsor’ and ‘The Taming of the Shrew.’ Now they have, I think, taken up Sheridan.*”

So his fellows at Madras were, under capable guidance, brushing up and improving their acquaintance with the English Classics. He would not lag behind his Madras friends and he spared no pains to make the Debating Society at Masulipatam an efficient instrument of self-improvement and culture. Papers and periodicals were sent for ; meetings were often held, when there were discussions and readings from choice authors. He got his English friends to take an interest in the proceedings of the society and occasionally preside or lecture in the meetings. In this work he was warmly helped by Mr. G. A. Ballard, Assistant Collector of the District, who always treated Sashiah as a friend and equal.

Sashiah did not confine himself to routine work. He took up important revenue problems, studied them intelligently and arriving at sound and statesmanlike views, placed them before his



English friends and official superiors. Many an intellectual joust passed between himself and Mr. Holloway, the Head Assistant Collector, each of whom had come, in the petition work, to know and respect the talents of the other. It was Sashiah's ambition to secure the approbation, so hard to win, of such a competent critic and to him he submitted the more important of his reports and memorandums for suggestion and amendment. This relationship of the intellect was a source of mutual gratification and continued till March 1855 when Mr. Holloway went away on promotion. That Mr. Holloway had great regard for Sashiah can be seen from the following extract from a note of V. Shadagopacharlu :—

Mr. Holloway is now here. I was gratified to hear from him such a good account of you that I thought I could with advantage exchange positions with you. I do not recollect all he said of you, except one thing, *i.e.*, that you are a "perfect gentleman."

About Sashiah's grasp of English idiom Mr. Holloway expressed himself in a note to Sashiah, "You write remarkably well and your knowledge of our language is altogether remarkable. But take my advice and endeavour to divest yourself of a little fluidity and grandiosity of expression which I meet here and there in your official style."



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

In January 1855 the Head Sheristadar fell ill and took leave of absence; he was expected to return to duty about the month of April; meanwhile, Sashiah was asked to do the work of both the Naib and the Head Sheristadar. The permanent incumbent was still badly off in April and sought for and obtained continuation of leave for a long period and the arrangement under which Sashiah looked after both duties was continued, an allowance of Rs. 80 being granted to him for this additional responsibility.

His friend Madhava Rao's letter to him from Trevandram on hearing of his rapid rise deserves quotation :—

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I was rejoiced to hear that so early you are in the highest post accessible to natives in the Revenue line. There is not the least doubt that you deserve a far higher. Perhaps and probably, *you* will be the means of opening to our countrymen the higher walks of the service. *You* are probably destined to enter them first, bidding your brethren to follow you !

You will be glad to hear that I have been scarcely less prosperous. I am now a Dewan Peiskar on a salary of Rs. 600 per month. Here is a tangible instance of the bounty of Providence. Having given me a large family, it was necessary to provide means of supporting it in ease and comfort.

We are healthy and happy. Six voices of both sexes call me father in eloquent and melodious confusion ! !



I am most anxious to know all the particulars of your welfare. To how many subjects do you give the law in your family ?

It is now years since you left Madras and your friends. When are you to visit them again ?

Just as I am writing our Dewan's father-in-law is looking on : an old man bending (no, I am wrong ; he does not *bend*) under the weight of four score. He has been speaking very highly of your abilities and rare virtues, both public and private. That you should have acquired such high reputation in a strange country and amidst strangers, who may be jealous and envious of you, speaks volumes.

* * * *

His Highness once when jesting told me that my salary of Rs. 600 is regulated at the rate of one hundred for each child. I said in reply that if that was the principle of promotion, I could soon entitle myself to further additions, till His Highness be compelled to own himself and generosity foiled !

* * * *

The permanent Sheristadar never recovered from his illness ; he died on 18th August, 1855. Mr. Lushington was going away on leave ; but before going, he wrote to Mr. J. Goldingham, who had succeeded Mr. Walter Elliot as Commissioner for the Northern Circars, proposing the permanent appointment of Sashiah as the Head Sheristadar.

The new Commissioner objected to the appointment of a junior like Sashiah, and in the



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

proceedings, dated Vizagapatam, 27th September, 1855, stated his views thus:—

“In regard to A. Sashiah’s permanently holding that office the Commissioner feels that to confirm him in it would be unjust to his seniors, if one can be found in all respects qualified to discharge its duties. Sashiah’s period of services extends to 7 years only. It is true that a good education and application to duty have placed him above many who entered the Public Service before him; still it is not right that the claims of seniority, when accompanied by fitness, should be entirely overlooked.

The Commissioner would wish the appointment of Sashiah to be reconsidered with reference to the above remarks.”

Mr. James Fraser, the Sub-Collector who was in charge of the District during the absence of Mr. Lushington, supported Mr. Lushington’s proposal in the following manner:—

“From my own knowledge of the nominee I think it will be difficult to find a person *as well* qualified in all respects for the appointment though doubtless qualified persons are to be had without difficulty. I must presume that Mr. Lushington in selecting Sashiah had taken into consideration the claims and fitness of other candidates from whom he must doubtless have received applications for the post. I know of no other person whose general qualifications will at all bear comparison with his, and in addition to his liberal and enlightened views in revenue management generally, his experience in and knowledge of this District in particular render his appointment to the post to which he has been nominated particularly desirable in my opinion. I therefore beg to support Mr. Lushington’s nomination.”



Mr. Goldingham reconsidered his objections in the light of Mr. Fraser's recommendations and confirmed Sashiah as Head Sheristadar.

Thus in seven years after he entered service as an humble clerk he had risen to one of the topmost rungs of the official ladder, to the dignified station of Head Sheristadar of a District—risen not by wealth, influence, “knee-tribute or prostration vile,” but by dint of honest, manly and intelligent work, by recognition that comes to work done for work's sake and by watchfully taking at the flood the tide that leads on to fortune.



CSL

CHAPTER IV.

“A NATIVE COLLECTOR.”

Sashiah refers to his confirmation in his diary in these simple terms: “5th November ’55, Monday. My confirmation : Proceedings received.” In what spirit he conceived of his duties and responsibilities may be seen from the following prayer with which he begins the diary for the next year :—

influence of the Bible

“I am humbly thankful to Thee, oh Great Father of all, for all Thy care and mercies and forgiveness towards an unworthy servant shown during the year now passed away. And I entreat Thee humbly for the continuance of the same favour and indulgence in the year just commenced. Vouchsafe to Thy servant understanding ever to walk in the paths most acceptable in Thy sight, sincerely and fearlessly. As Thou hast deigned to bless Thy servant with some little power and influence among men, so help him also with the good sense to use them well and never to abuse them.”

As Head Sheristadar he was the confidential minister of the Collector and the virtual ruler of the District. He could now bring his influence to bear on the administration of the entire District and he now did for it what he had done in a more limited sphere as Tahsildar. Inefficient officers were gradually weeded out and re-



placed by younger, abler and more conscientious men. This was carried out slowly and as fair opportunities occurred—not with the indecorous haste or undue precipitancy of hot-blooded reformers whose zeal gets the better of their prudence. Honest and efficient work was recognised. This as well as the unconscious influence of an exceptionally able and pure-souled officer at the Head-quarters raised the tone of the service and made the District a model one in many respects.

The disposal of petitions next claimed his attention. He had seen the evils of leaving cases to accumulate. Mr. Holloway's method, though it had been sure, could not be justified except under extreme pressure. Remissness in the disposal of work had subjected Mr. Lushington to severe censure from higher quarters and earned for him the nickname of Doubtington. *Apropos* of this, Sir Henry Montgomery had expressed to Sashiah during an interview he had with him at Madras while on short leave: "I would sooner come to a wrong conclusion than come to no conclusion at all." Sir Henry's characteristic words had made a deep impression on Sashiah, who, even more so now than before, made it a point to see that no arrears of work were allowed to stand and multiply.



The records of the Collector's office had been for many, many years past left to accommodate themselves as best they could in the office-rooms, and all available corners had been appropriated by them and they lay pell-mell, and turned up in the most unexpected places. Reference to old records had become almost impossible. Rats revelled in unmolested possession of this realm of chaos and frisked and danced and kept a perpetual feast amidst the piles of records. As a check on their inroads, an 'official' cat was maintained at a cost of three rupees a month. But the plan did not do. The official cat waxed fat (and philosophic) on the allowance and had little mind to meddle with the ways of rats. Mr. Fraser, the Acting Collector, stopped the allowance on the principle that it is only hungry cats that catch mice. Sashiah tried a surer plan and succeeded. He set to work on this formidable mass of records, had it arranged in chronological bundles and stowed away in a systematic and orderly manner so as to facilitate easy reference. The rats did not evidently relish this new order of things and emigrated to more congenial environments.

The traditional mode of conducting all office work at night by lamp-light was still in vogue in the Collector's as well as all the taluq



offices. This was a great hardship to the parties that resorted to the courts. In magisterial cases the system opened a way for a good deal of corruption. The peons were bribed and witnesses lay concealed in dark corners where they could overhear evidence and adjusted their testimony to what had transpired. All this evil Sashiah had known as Tahsildar and put down in his own cutcherry. Now that he was Head Sheristadar in which capacity he could control the working of all the offices in the District he extended to the Collector's office and all the taluq cutcherries the scheme of closing all office work by dusk, which he had so successfully carried out in his own office as Tahsildar. This arrangement afforded great convenience to the public in general and a wholesome check was placed on malpractice and corruption. The fact that the saving in lamp-oil alone amounted to thousands of Rupees a year in the District shows how late into the night had been carried the work of the day and what a great relief the new arrangement was to the public servants and the people at large.

The Sircar revenue was then collected in kind under what was known as the *Kyle* system. Servants of the Government were present during the harvesting and the Government went shares on the produce harvested. This



was a very tedious and troublesome process and led to great abuses. To remedy the evils, another method—known as the *Anchana Nevada* system—division of produce on an estimate of the probable crop—was introduced as an experimental measure. This too did not work better and had to make room for the *village joint rent system* (or payment in money of the commuted value of the Government share) whereby every landholder of a village was responsible for the Sircar revenue both individually and collectively for the whole village. All these measures were tried tentatively one after another and found wanting till at last the *Mukta* or a fixed money-rent was settled on the lands. These frequent changes might have unsettled, if not alarmed, the minds of the people, but for the confidence they had in Sashiah and the tact with which he gradually prepared them for the several reforms.

He not only stood well with the people, he was also in the good graces of his official superiors. He acted as the interpreter between the Government and the people, and while zealously guarding the interests of both, displeased neither. The Collectors under whom he served have borne ungrudging testimony to his worth and services in their annual settlement reports.

The secret of his success has been divined



with the true insight of a friend by Madhava Rao and cannot be better expressed than in his words. Writing to Sashiah from Trevandram on the 30th January, 1854, he says:—

“They say you are all powerful at Masulipatam. I can well imagine this: for one so able, so mild and forgiving, so upright and benevolent as yourself is sure to be treated with the greatest kindness and esteem by your superiors.”

At home he granted no interview to visitors on official business. In the evenings, after office work he spent an hour or two with a Sanskrit Pandit. Choice passages from Sanskrit Literature were read and explained by the Pandit. Sashiah took great interest in these readings. He did not aim at a systematic, scholarly grasp of the language. His work in the office taxed all his energies, physical and intellectual, and all that he wanted after a full day's work was relaxation. Cards, merry parties, music and other sources of amusement and recreation could have been indulged in; but his tastes did not lie in any of these directions. Conversation—intellectual conversation—was his only luxury, and these readings with a learned Pandit and chats with him mainly on literary topics served to give rest and variety to an overworked mind. The habit he now picked up of spending an hour or two with a Pandit has continued to this day. He knows, as no one else



can, the ways of the Pandit, his strength and his weakness, his modes of reasoning and his methods of interpretation, his simplicity and his exaggerated style of speaking. But he admires the Pandit's learning and looks on his foibles with an indulgent eye and delights to chat with him and learn, instruct and be instructed. His acquaintance, thus cultivated, with Sanskrit Literature, ranges over a very wide variety of subjects; his special attraction, however, was Indian metaphysics—not the higher flights of dialectical ingenuity but the half poetical, half ratiocinative treatises like Sankara's *Atmabodha*, *Advaita-makaranda*, whose felicitous similes and striking analogies had an irresistible attraction for a mind, like his, cast in the mould of metaphor. And to this day he ~~could~~^{can} recite verse after verse of these works, in an endless flow, with a relish that long familiarity has no way abated.

It may be incidentally mentioned here that it was at this time that he took up a labour of love—a descriptive catalogue of all extant works in Sanskrit Literature. This he called “A walk through the flower-beds of Sanskrit Literature.” He drew up a list of all the works he came across, grouped them under the different headings Poetry, Logic, Grammar, Philosophy and so on; wrote in Telugu, against each name, a short sum-



mary of its contents, with a few remarks on its method and style. This catalogue, begun now, was added to in the course of his wanderings during the Inâm Commission days, till the list came up to 1500 works in all. Dr. Burnell of Oriental fame, Judge of Tanjore and a friend of Sashiah, happened to hear of this catalogue, and at his earnest request the manuscript was consigned to his scholarly care and is still perhaps to be seen among the other books of the Orientalist in the Halls of the East India Library to which he bequeathed his valuable collection.

In 1856 he desired to get a transfer to the Southern Districts. He had been long away from his native District and from his people. Five years and more of life at Masulipatam had naturalised him to the District and he had come to love it with almost the love of a native. But his wife and aged mother preferred, if it could be managed, to go back and live amidst their own people. Sashiah could not ignore their reasonable desire and accordingly wished to secure a transfer. Mr. T. D. Lushington who had appointed him to the Head Sheristadarship was at this time in England on furlough. Sashiah with a rare delicacy of feeling thought himself bound to consult Mr. Lushington and have his permission



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

before he could take any steps in the matter. He accordingly wrote to Mr. Lushington who replied :—

EASTBOURNE SUSSEX,

9th October, 1856.

“I must now tell you that it was with very great concern that I read that passage of your letter of the 18th June in which you intimate your views about a possible transfer to Tanjore of yourself as Head Sheristadar in the event of an opportunity being open to you. I do not wish to say much about it, but whatever you may do when you are considerably more advanced in life, I do not think that you ought to seek a change from Masulipatam at present. I need not tell you how highly I value your services. I have shown my appreciation of them to the full extent of my power;—but unquestionably one of the points in your favour which was not without weight in my estimation was the fact that you were in the prime of life;—I felt that, in selecting you for the office of Head Sheristadar, there was the great advantage, in addition to your other qualifications, of there being every human probability of your being connected with the District in this important position for a long series of years. You are well aware that the District is one which is susceptible of great improvement. The Deltas of the Krishna and the Godavery may become as fertile as that of the Cauvery although we may not live to see the complete change. You have a far better chance of doing so than I have, and if you care for future fame I believe there is a wider opening in a District such as Masulipatam, which has just begun to rise from a state of extreme depression, than in one such as Tanjore.

Having mentioned to you one of the views which influ-



enced me in your nomination to your present office, I shall not say more than that I do not at all contemplate any such contingency in regard to myself as the transfer to which you allude."

* * * * *

Accordingly Sashiah gave up the idea of a change for the present and when immediately after a vacancy occurred in the District of Tanjore, his friend Ramiengar, Sub-division Sheristadar of Nellore, got the Tanjore Head Sheristadarship.

The Reverend R. T. Noble was the pioneer of education in Masulipatam, and the Mission School he had established there was in a very flourishing condition. In 1856 a few high caste students of the institution were detained in the Mission house preparatory to baptism. This event roused great indignation among the native community. A very influential meeting of the natives was held to protest against it and concert measures to prevent a recurrence of the event. Sashiah presided over the deliberations; large funds were subscribed on the spot and more were promised. A Hindu High School was started, a Committee was formed to manage the newly established institution, and Sashiah was made the President. A European Headmaster was secured, and under the able supervision of Sashiah who continued for many years to guide its destinies,



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

the school thrive and acted as a wholesome check on the proselytising tendencies of the Mission School. Mr. George Norton had written to Sashiah: "Ought you not, from the very success in life you have attained, by the high position you and they have gained through your education under the original system, to endeavour at least to gain the same advantages for your fellow-countrymen and hand down your names as noble labourers for the public good when your services are most called for?" Sashiah was fully sensible of his responsibility in this direction and spared no efforts to make his school the medium of a sound and thorough secular education. Sir Charles Trevelyan, Governor of Madras, made a tour in the Northern Circars and records in his minutes of the tour:—

"But the great source of satisfaction to me was the state of the Educational Institutions at Masulipatam. Mr. Noble, who has for sixteen years devoted moral and intellectual attainments of a high order to the instruction of the rising generation . . . and Sashiah Sastri, and the other founders and supporters of the Grant-in-Aid Anglo-Vernacular School, will be known hereafter as those who have planted the germs of an improved learning in this interesting and important part of the Madras Presidency. Masulipatam bids fair to become to the Northern Circars more than Oxford and Cambridge have been to the United Kingdom."

It was only in 1863 when Sashiah was in the



Inam Commission, far removed from Masulipatam, with no prospect of a return to the District, that he resigned, in the interests of the institution, the Presidentship of the Committee, with a request that it should be taken up by one on the spot who could therefore exercise a more efficient control over the school. He intimated the same to the then Director of Public Instruction, Lieutenant-Colonel Macdonald, who acknowledged his services in the following letter :—

WALTAIR, 26th March, 1863.

MY DEAR SIR,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter informing me that you have resigned the office of the President of the Hindu School of Masulipatam. I trust that it may continue to improve under your successor and long remain a monument of your zeal in the cause of education. That that cause will continue to receive your support in whatever part of the Presidency you may be employed, I cannot doubt.

Believe me,

Yours sincerely,

MACDONALD.

In October 1898 Sir Arthur Havelock, Governor of Madras, in the course of one of his tours, paid a visit to the Hindu High School, Masulipatam, and the following extracts from the School Committee's Address and His Excellency's reply will be of interest in this connection :—



“On an occasion like this, we dare not detain Your Excellency with details respecting the institutions which we have the honor to represent, but we think it will interest Your Excellency to know that our High School, which is one of the largest and oldest institutions of its kind in these parts, was founded so far back as 1856 by the Honorable A. Sashiah, Sastriar, C.S.I., of Kumbhakonam, who was, then and for many years, connected with the Revenue Department of this District.”

His Excellency replied to the address as follows :—

“Mr. President and Members of the Managing Committee of the Hindu High and Branch Schools of Masulipatam,—It was, I assure you, with sincere pleasure that I accepted your invitation to visit your school, and it has given me great satisfaction to have passed as I drove up to the school building the number of boys assembled outside with their bright faces and intelligent appearance. Even if there had been no other reason for my taking an interest in this school it would have been sufficient for me that it was founded by my friend Mr. A. Sashiah Sastri, whose acquaintance I had great pleasure in making a few weeks ago in his own house at Kumbhakonam. I sat at Mr. Sashiah Sastri's feet for more than an hour obtaining from him most useful information with regard to social, political, and all other matters connected with Southern India, and I should have been glad, if time had allowed, to have sat considerably longer. It is evident from the statement that you make in the Address which has been read that the work of this school is very much appreciated in Masulipatam and its neighbourhood.”

In 1857 all India was thrown into convulsions by the Great Mutiny. Fortunately Southern



India was loyal and law-abiding; vague and exaggerated rumours, however, of the achievements of the mutineers and the overthrow of the British Power went in whispers from mouth to mouth. Such idle gossip was perfectly harmless among the peaceful orders of the community; but here and there among the warlike Mussalmans, there were signs of a hostile spirit. Masulipatam had a large Mussalman population and was, after Hyderabad, the place most noted for Mohorrum riots and troubles; and the faintest wave of "'57" passed through the town. There was nothing like an open rebellion; but placards were found stuck up in all conspicuous places, in which were written the inflammatory words—Kill all the Christian dogs. It was therefore thought necessary to adopt precautionary military measures and to Sashiah fell the brunt of this work; and he had the satisfaction of seeing that there was no further display of rebellious feeling in the town.

When in 1858 the Government of India was assumed by Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, he had the honour of drawing up the address to the Queen from the inhabitants of Masulipatam. That address was considered one of the best, if not the best, from India and had



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

the honour of being sent by Lord Stanley, Secretary of State, *direct* and at once to the Queen.

The address runs thus :—

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY,

1. Your Majesty's Liege Subjects of this ancient town beg to approach Your Majesty's Throne, and tender their allegiance and welcome on the auspicious occasion of Your Majesty's assuming the direct Sovereignty of these wide Dominions.

2. They beg to avail themselves of this opportunity to record their high and grateful sense of the benefits they have enjoyed under the administration of the Honorable East India Company, who, as Trustees for the Crown, have, for nearly a century, ruled India, extending their protection to them all in the enjoyment of their Civil and Religious immunities.

3. Your Majesty's Proclamation has given joy and assurance to all classes of Your Majesty's subjects, who trust that, as time advances, the ties of affection between Your Majesty and the subjects may be drawn closer and closer, and the loyalty for which Madras has of late been so happily remarkable, may become more and more conspicuous.

4. Your Majesty's gracious declaration in regard to two subjects, always dear to the Natives of India, has commanded universal applause, thankfulness, and confidence. Both the tenures of land and the religious beliefs in this country are as various and diversified as they are throughout the earth. India, in fact, is a world in miniature. That a country so constituted cannot be otherwise well governed than on the most liberal principles of forbearance, toleration and perfect neutrality, is doubtless obvious to Your Majesty.



CSL

5. Your Majesty has rightly judged of their attachment to their lands inherited from their forefathers. The rights in the land are the growth of centuries. Your Majesty's subjects therefore are rejoiced to learn Your Majesty's desire to protect them, and ever feel confident that the greatest indulgence will be shown in dealing with all questions connected with them.

6. Higher than the paternal lands, Your Majesty's subjects regard their religion, their laws and their customs. They therefore feel happy and exceedingly thankful for the declaration of Your Royal pleasure, that "none be in any wise favoured, none molested or disquieted by reason of their religious faith or observance."

7. Your Majesty's subjects are most desirous of participating in those benefits of western science and civilization, which have made the nations of Europe so powerful and wealthy, and which have raised England to such ascendancy over the world. They therefore hope that the education and advancement of the people will be a subject always next to the heart of Your Majesty.

8. Your Majesty's subjects have read with peculiar satisfaction the gracious terms of Your Majesty's amnesty to the misguided thousands still in arms against the Paramount Authority. They regard that amnesty as the rainbow of God after the Deluge, and trust that such events may never again occur.

9. It is centuries since a Sovereign of Hindustan sat on the throne to receive in State the homage of the millions of this land. Your Majesty's Liege subjects pray, therefore, that Your Majesty will condescend to bless this country with a royal visit at no distant date, and so grant them an opportunity of prostrating themselves at Your Majesty's Throne.



CSL

4. *SASHIAH SASTRI :*

and personally tendering their allegiance, and admiring in their sovereign what is universally admitted to be the emblem on earth of those queenly virtues which rarely reside but in heaven.

10. In conclusion, Your Majesty's subjects, fully sensible of the truth and sincerity of Your Majesty's touching declaration that "in their prosperity will be our strength; in their contentment our security; and in their gratitude our best reward," and always considering it their particular fortune to be under such a powerful and civilized government as that of Great Britain, will ever continue attached to Your Majesty's person and throne. They pray that Your Majesty's reign may ever be bright as the morning star; and that Your Majesty may enjoy all the happiness and comfort God vouchsafes to a virtuous sovereign, whose delight ever is in obeying His commands and ruling her subjects well. They further pray that wisdom may guide the Counsels of Your Majesty's Ministers, and that heroism may strengthen Your Majesty's Warriors, that the rod of the Magistrate may never be lifted, nor the sword of the soldier ever unsheathed but at the bid of justice, and that Your Majesty's gentle mercy may always temper the severity of stern justice, so that, all Your Majesty's humble and poor subjects may ever have reason to love, honor, obey and bless their Gracious Sovereign.

Full of loyalty and humble submission, they crave Your Royal permission to conclude, subscribing themselves,

Always Your Majesty's faithful, obedient and loving subjects.

Writing of this address to Sashiah, Mr. George Norton says :—



ROYVOLS COURT,
SWALLOWFIELD BERKS,
24th March, 1859.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I am happy in a good occasion to write to you, having read with much admiration the address to the Queen from the inhabitants of Masulipatam. Sir Henry Montgomery who has the greatest esteem and regard for you, sent it me, and I have sent it to Sir George Clark, with a warm statement of my sentiments towards you, and a history of your career. I have done this because I can have no doubt of the authorship, for I recognise not only the style but the sentiments, and am proud to think they are such as I always endeavoured to inculcate among the scholars of the High School, and most gratified to find that they actuate yourself and those like you. This note will satisfy you that none of the worthy proficientes are forgotten by me.....

Believe me most sincerely yours,
GEO. NORTON.

28th March, 1859.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I must do myself the gratification of adding a few lines to my recent letter, to tell you that Lord Stanley has sent the Masulipatam Address direct, and at once, to the Queen—and I have it under his own hand that “it is worthy of being so sent.” This will give great pleasure to your surrounding friends, and the inhabitants of your District generally. At the same time there can be no doubt that their address would have been duly delivered to Her Gracious Majesty in the ordinary course, independently of this special manner in which it has been placed before Her



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

Royal attention by that distinguished nobleman holding the very highest post in the administration of Her Indian Empire.

Lord Stanley is fully aware of my sentiments towards you and of your abilities and honourable character and of the career you have passed in attaining the highest honours of the (alas late!) High School, and in the Public Service. He has also been made acquainted with my views and impressions on the lapsed state of National Education in your Presidency and whether his sentiments are in entire unison with my own on that topic—or only in a greater or less degree—I am certain his able attention will be given to the subject and to all others connected with the future good Government of India, as long as for the blessing of our common country he holds office in the administration.

Believe me to be,

Yours most faithfully,

GEO. NORTON.

In 1858 Mr. Newill was appointed as the first Director of Revenue Settlement and he began operations in the District of Masulipatam. Sashiah was requested by the Collector to furnish Mr. Newill with information and help. He accordingly went to the Director's tent and sent in his card. No immediate answer came. He waited outside, in his carriage, for half an hour and not finding that his card was noticed returned to his office. Though next day Mr. Newill sent for him and apologised for his apparent rudeness, which he ascribed to his having been absorbed in some



pressing work, Sashiah anticipated no pleasant relations from such a beginning ; and he was not far wrong.

Mr. Newill with the confidence of inexperience devised a short cut towards ascertaining the productive capacity of soils ; a square yard of paddy was made the basis of his experiments, and calculations were made thereon on the unassailable principles of Mathematics. The results must have been very gratifying to the Director and the Government he represented if only they could have made any reasonable approach to actual facts. Sashiah pointed out the error of such a procedure and predicted the calculations would come to nought, and so they did ; for the conclusions of the mathematical process established, if the data were correct, that the revenue of the District could be enhanced a hundredfold ! Even Mr. Newill was staggered by such fabulous plenty and was fain to accept in part the sober methods advocated by Sashiah.

Sashiah thus refers to this in a letter :—

“ I dare say you well remember what a hotch potch they made of it when Mr. Newill directed the operations. They went on classifying the soils without the slightest knowledge of what it would come to, and when they found that the results gave apocryphal quantities of produce they simply stood aghast at the grim spectre of their own creation. They went about correcting and recorrecting the classification lists

human



(in camera !) till the results were brought down to something like *reasonable* figures ! ”

It was not pleasing to Mr. Newill to find that a native and a Cutcherry hack could give points to a specialist like himself. Differences of opinion constantly cropped up between the two. Mr. Newill was infallible and Sashiah incorrigible. (As Mr. G. N. Taylor once remarked to Mr. Ranga Charlu), Sashiah was an aristocratic Brahman ; once his views were formed, it was not easy—often not possible—to convince him out of them. Sashiah wrote to Mr. Goldingham, the Commissioner, about his thoughts on survey and settlement and was glad to find that the Commissioner shared his views. Mr. Goldingham wrote :—

“ I have received your letter of the 6th instant as well as the previous one. I am very glad to hear from you the results of your experience in so interesting a matter as survey and assessment. Your views regarding Khandam measurement are good and I have long been of opinion that this is the proper way of conducting a Government Revenue Survey. This opinion I find is gaining ground and will no doubt, as you say, be general ere long.”

Soon afterwards Mr. Ballard, his old friend, came back to the District as Deputy Director. Sashiah's methods now found eager and hearty acceptance and his co-operation in the classification of the soils and the computation of their value was welcomed and warmly acknowledged.



In 1857 the Government contemplated the appointment of a new class of officers to be called Deputy Collectors ; the details concerning the status and duties of these officers formed the subject of much correspondence and discussion. There was also a proposal to abolish the Head Sheristadarships. Sashiah took part in these discussions and submitted his views to his former chief, Mr. Walter Elliot, who replied :—

MADRAS,

2nd June, 1857.

DEAR SASHIAH,

I forgot in writing to you yesterday to tell you that I heartily concurred in your views regarding the position to be held by Sheristadars and Deputy Collectors.

Both Sir H. Montgomery and myself have written strongly against the proposed abolition of the former office and I hope and trust the measure may not be adopted.

I observe you also propose to invest the Sheristadar with independent jurisdiction. This I think of more doubtful expediency because a Sheristadar now is so exclusively a ministerial officer. The suggestion however is well worthy of consideration.

* * * * *

About the close of 1858 all the preliminaries had been settled and Deputy Collectors were on the eve of being appointed. Sashiah desired, at least during this opportunity, to be posted to a Southern District.



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

But when the appointments were made, Sashiah got Nellore. Mr. Walter Elliot referring to this appointment, wrote to Sashiah:—

MADRAS,
6th May, 1859.

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

I am very glad to see your name in the list of Deputy Collectors lately published and hope you will like your new duties. * * * *

I shall be glad to hear what charge you get at Nellore and it will always be a true source of gratification to me to hear of your welfare.

We had a very good Anniversary at the Presidency College last week. It quite keeps up its character under Mr. Powell's able superintendence and some of the highest scholars of the year do him great credit. It was a remarkable and interesting circumstance to see several of the first class pupils sitting side by side in the front rank decorated with honorable insignia of the Degree of B.A. : a sight I rejoice to have seen before leaving the East. My time expires in December and I shall then, please God, bid adieu to India—a country where I have passed the best years of my life and in which I leave many subjects in which I take deep interest, many friends for whom I feel a lasting esteem, and among the latter, there is no one whose future career I shall watch with deeper solicitude than that of A. Sashiah.

Believe me to be always

Your sincere friend,

(sin)

WALTER ELLIOT.

Sashiah was requested to go to Nellore and take charge of the Treasury. His pay was Rs. 350



a month. He wrote to the Government stating that his experience and abilities as a Revenue officer would rust in the Treasury and requested the favour of being put on active revenue work. The Government replied that the arrangements could not be altered as they deemed it necessary that exceptionally trustworthy officers alone should be in charge of the Treasury.

Meanwhile the Inâm Commission had come into existence, with the object, in the words of Sir Charles Trevelyan, then Governor of Madras, "of quieting the possession and giving the Inâmdârs proprietary titles." Mr. G. N. Taylor was appointed the presiding officer and he was requested to nominate his staff of subordinates. Many of the newly created Deputy Collectors were drafted to this work. Mr. G. N. Taylor in a letter to Government, dated the 16th June 1859, proposing his staff of Deputy Collectors, wrote: "A. Sashiah and V. Ramiah are too well known as the able and highly esteemed Head Sheristadars of Masulipatam and Tanjore respectively to require further recommendation from me." Sixteen of these officers were, it might be added, Powell's boys. Sashiah was, among others, placed in the Inâm Commission and posted to Nellore, without however any increase of pay. He felt that his services would be more valuable at



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

Masulipatam where he had worked for so many years and that his worth and his position as a Senior Deputy Collector had not been properly recognised. He wrote to Mr. Taylor about it as follows :—

4th July, 1859.

RESPECTED SIR,

I am duly honored with the receipt of your kind letter of the 21st June and its enclosures. I have received also the letter of the 14th instant through Mr. Knox from Ootacamund. I esteem it a great privilege to serve in the Inam Commission and am very thankful to you for your remembrance of me and for what I fear I little deserve, the very complimentary way in which you have been pleased to bring my name before Government. I hope it will equally please God to give me good sense to deserve your commendation and to grant me health to conduct with energy the task entrusted to me. As I have been for sometime past keeping my hands pretty free of arrears in anticipation of my departure for Nellore, I am glad to say that I am equally free of office arrears at this moment. Since the receipt of your letter, I am devoting what time I can spare from the current work of the office to collating all the information bearing on the subject of Inams to be found among the Hoozoor Records. Within the last 3 years, I have completed a Register of all the Inam tenures in the District. Thus one important step is ready accomplished here. There are certain old Registers of Inams which contain very valuable information but which are so worn out as to be hardly fit for daily use in the Inam investigations. I am now engaged in getting these copied out in sections so that they may be used by different officers conducting enquiries



A NATIVE COLLECTION

CSL

in different parts of the District own wishes had been consulted in conducting Inam investigation work in Nellore—for while I am in accordance with the former, I am a party to the latter. There were probably weighty reasons for my being employed in Nellore and I am not in a position to leave the District so near to the Presidency. At the same time I shall try my best and contribute to the cause of the Inam as far as I am able. I have gained by my experience in the past that it may be of some help to my friends in the future. Investigations in this District are really in such a condition that it will be a very difficult work to set on foot without great knowledge of the District and its people.

Before concluding I beg your pardon for the subject of somewhat delicate nature has been gladly avoided but for an uneasy state of mind to get cleared up. Among the Inams of the District and Ramienger are omitted, though the Deputy Collectors, selected by the Government. Every one else so far as the promotion of various degrees, some from Rs. 200 to Rs. 250—without exception are our junior officers. I mean to quarrel with fortune or my fellows, I confess I cannot keep my temper. Your first letter and the subsequent one thereon led me to believe at first that my promotion was uncertain. My name in the Gazette must have been published and I have since learnt with regret that promotion



A. K. SASTRI :

CSL

where he
and that his work
Senior Deputy Collector
recognised. He wrote
I, however, I fully trust that your
highest degree, will not leave
deputies selected, to be ashamed
or equals. If, in writing on a
written ought with undue free-
ive me at once and wipe it off

* * *

ts were immediately after
entered upon the duties of
he was sent on promotion
was entrusted with the
of an important portion of
Kâveri Delta, which was
called the *Olungu* settle-
which fluctuated each year
of paddy.

the only one left without
h. Mr. Taylor wrote to
July, 1859 :—

C. Ranga Charlu started yesterday
trust, before I am. We look to
from your local experience. You
Gazette that Ramiah has been pro-
quence of his being employed on
d with the Inam Department from
or the present. I have urged your
told in reply that it is premature.
atient and I feel confident you will

iah worked on in the same



grade and on the same pay and settled a few taluks in Masulipatam. Mr. Ranga Charlu and Mr. Markar were the Special Assistants of Mr. Taylor and as such were above all the Inâm Deputy Collectors both as regarded their status and their salary. Mr. Markar was a school-fellow of Sashiah and was not the equal of him either in academical distinctions or abilities ; and Ranga Charlu, though of exceptionally brilliant parts, had been his junior both at school and in service. These two had now been placed above him though his official career had no way belied the expectations of his splendid career at school. He wrote to the Government, therefore, urging his claims to more generous treatment. The petition came up to Sir Charles Trevelyan, Governor, who had not only known him by hearsay, but had, through direct correspondence, come to know of his personal worth and capabilities. Sir Charles instantly raised him to a higher grade and a higher salary—Rs. 500. In the Gazette notification of this promotion Sashiah was, by some mistake, styled as Sashiah Sastri. But it was a title to which he might have laid claim since it was a hereditary privilege and he has ever since adopted it.

Sashiah Sastri was now satisfied and in the new capacity worked away with great zeal.

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A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

Mr. Markar was not equal to the heavy work that fell on his shoulders as a Special Assistant. Mr. G. N. Taylor saw this and saw also that Sashiah was the proper man for the place. So on the earliest opportunity that offered, Mr. Markar was transferred to the judicial service and Sashiah was appointed in 1860 as Special Assistant to the Commissioner on a salary of Rs. 600 and placed on a par with his early friend and schoolmate, C. Ranga Charlu.

From this time, for a few years, his personal history merges into that of the Inâm Commission of which he, with Ranga Charlu, had now become the guiding spirit.



CHAPTER V.

IN THE INAM COMMISSION.

Inâm tenure can be traced to a very remote antiquity in India ; it is almost coeval with the recognition of the Brahmans as the intellectual and spiritual representatives of the body politic in Aryan Society. From the earliest times the Brahman was in charge of the Word of God, ministered to the spiritual wants of the Aryan community and was entrusted with the function of imparting all learning, religious and secular. Devotion to spiritual and intellectual work is incompatible with a distracting pursuit of material well-being. The rulers of the country acting on this principle gave away whole villages to learned and deserving Brahmans and exempted them from every kind of assessment. Freed from all disturbing cares the Brahmans were able to consecrate their lives to self-culture and dissemination of knowledge. Instinct and heredity, aided by the munificence of enlightened rulers, secured for the Brahmans a life of plain living and high thinking and they naturally came to be recognised as the intellectual aristocracy of the land. / The



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

exactness, accuracy and thoroughness with which all Indo-Aryan learning has been preserved for thousands of years, often in later times through centuries of foreign invasion, anarchy and misrule and almost without the artificial aid of writing, have excited astonishment and even incredulity ; but it is well to remember that the Brahman, ever true to his trust, prepared himself for his life's work, literary and spiritual, by years of patient and systematic study, devoted the rest of his life to the faithful performance of his task—a whole-hearted pursuing and imparting of knowledge—and deserved and justified the liberal and far-sighted policy which placed him above want and care and left him in undisturbed fulfilment of his mission.

Indian law-givers, themselves Brahmans, naturally recognised the gift of lands to deserving Brahmans as the most meritorious of charities and by their writings gave a peculiarly religious sanction to a practice which had so conspicuously benefited the country in general, and their section in particular. Hindu sovereigns in quest of religious merit made free gifts of land to worthy Brahmans on sacred occasions and confirmed their charities by documents in copper-plates and inscriptions which declared in the most solemn terms that the grants were to stand "as long as the sun



and the moon endure” and invoked a heavy curse on those that disturbed the tenure. Such were the pledges given by the rulers of Vijianagar, by the Pandian rulers of Madura and by the Maharatta princes who latterly ruled at Tanjore.

The Zemindars and petty chieftains who sprang up in Southern India in later times followed in the wake of the more ancient rulers and exercised to a considerable extent this prerogative of giving away lands. The religious institutions of the country, the spiritual headships of the several sections of the community, the Siva and the Vishnu temples without which there is hardly any important town or village in the land, the tutelary village deities whose favours are specially invoked during times of distress and affliction, the celebrated pagodas of Southern India such as those of Tirupati, Conjeeveram, Srirangam, Ramesvaram and Madura—all these were provided with more or less extensive grants of rent-free lands, both directly for their maintenance and for the support of those who had particular services to perform therein.

When the Mahommedans came into power they did not interfere with the more ancient grants held by Brahmans and temples. They made liberal fresh grants not only to their immediate



relatives and followers and the religious classes of their own faith, but also on occasions to Hindus and their religious institutions. In the early years of British rule, the Government of the day sometimes rewarded meritorious services by grants of *Jaghirs* and thus many villages were alienated either in perpetuity or for a stated number of lives ; but after the Despatches of the Court of Directors, dated 2nd January 1822 and 27 May 1829, pensions in money came to be the rule and grants of land were restricted to certain very special cases.

A considerable proportion of lands came, in these several ways, to belong to Inâm tenure. It was suspected that during the confusion that prevailed in the earlier period of British ascendancy, a large extent of land had been granted as Inâm by those who had no authority to make such alienations, that Inâm lands had in some cases passed, by questionable methods, out of the original family or had been fraudulently obtained or irregularly inherited. Between 1830 and 1840 certain regulations were passed by the Government with the object of preventing Inâms from being diverted from the purposes for which they had been granted and of securing to the Government its reversionary rights in cases of lapse.



An insurrection which occurred in Cuddappah about 1846 drew the attention of the Government to the danger and impolicy of the arbitrary resumption of tenures and the ill-advised transfer of landed property; and rules were framed on liberal principles regarding successions to or transfer of Inâm property. A vast number of cases came under enquiry, but as the revenue authorities, with their more pressing duties, found it difficult to attend promptly to these, a large body of Inâmdârs had often to be kept in suspense. This led to a general feeling of insecurity which manifested itself in numerous petitions to Government. A few rules were promulgated by the Government in 1848; but it was soon seen that the difficulties which beset the question could not be adequately met except by general measures of a remedial character. The Government therefore in an elaborate and comprehensive view of the whole question wrote to the Court of Directors in 1857, praying for orders to institute a thorough enquiry into Inâms by a special agency. The Court of Directors in passing orders on the proposal of the Madras Government directed that the investigation should be commenced with the least practicable delay and that it should be conducted by a distinct department and they



laid down certain general principles for the guidance of the Madras Government.

These were:—

i. That all Inâms enjoyed uninterruptedly since the introduction of the British rule, whether held under *sanads* or not, should be confirmed to the holders, except in cases where the lands had been acquired by questionable means.

ii. That a light assessment should be imposed as quit-rent. This step they felt justified in taking as in earlier days the native rulers had been in the practice of exacting a 'Nazrani' or fine in every case of succession to Inâm property and as the Inâm holders, depending as they did on the services of the Government for the protection of their rights and privileges, were bound, in reason to contribute, in a moderate degree, to the requirements of the state.

iii. That to reconcile the Inâmdârs to the proposed quit-rent, the existing restriction on the transfer of their estates should be removed and an indefeasible and absolute right of property should be granted to them.

iv. That the quit-rent might be redeemed by the payment of a lump sum equal to so many years' purchase of the quit-rent.

The Madras Inâm Commission was accordingly established in November 1858, and Mr. G. N.



Taylor was appointed Commissioner. Sir Charles Trevelyan soon after came over as Governor of Madras, and in May 1859 he propounded certain rules by which the principles enunciated by the Court of Directors were to be practically applied by the Commissioner.

The scheme of Settlement sketched by Sir Charles was worked out in detail by Mr. G. N. Taylor and his assistants. The operations of the Commission were commenced in Masulipatam, the earliest scene of the labours of the Revenue Survey and Settlement. The Commission worked away for seven years taking up District after District and within that comparatively short time a long pending question which had taxed the energies of the local officers for years was solved in a manner satisfactory both to the Government and that section of the community whose interests were at stake. At the close of the Commission the Government found that their *annual revenues* had been increased by about 8 lacs, while the *total cost* of the Commission had not gone up to more than 13 lacs of Rupees.

But it must be stated that gain to the state was not the sole or even the first motive for the institution of the Commission. The question was one of state policy, involving the interests of a



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

large body of the subject population. The restricted conditions of tenure under which Inâm property was generally held and the difficulties attending succession to or transfer of Inâm lands had been a source of irritation among the Inâm-dârs and an ever-increasing burden on the energies of revenue officers. The subject was fraught with important social and political consequences and it was feared that any measures taken to set the question at rest, on however liberal principles they might be based, would be regarded by the Inâm-dârs as an interference with their long-established rights and create discontent. The Commission had therefore to proceed very cautiously and the success which attended its labours testifies to the tact and ability of the officers on whom fell the responsible duty of carrying out the scheme.

The three officers who had to bear the brunt of the work were the Commissioner Mr. G. N. Taylor, and his two Special Assistants. The Inâm Deputy Collectors who were posted to the several Districts to inquire into the Inâm claims and register them were simply to act under instructions from the central office and all that was required of them was to patiently investigate the claims that came before them and to treat the Inâm-dârs with consideration and in a conciliatory



manner. This work they did smoothly, speedily and thoroughly and carried out faithfully the instructions they received from the Head-quarters. Most of the Deputy Collectors employed in the work were men who had received a superior English education. They brought to their task ability of a high order, great assiduity and strict integrity and the popular reception of the Commission was in a great measure due to the influence and respect they commanded among their fellow countrymen.

The Commission was peculiarly fortunate in having for its presiding officer a gentleman of such liberal principles and large-hearted sympathies as Mr. G. N. Taylor had. He was quick to recognise the exceptional abilities of his two Special Assistants and left them to manage the entire Department reserving to himself only a general supervision. Mr. Taylor acknowledges in warm terms his obligations to his native assistants in his reply to the valedictory address presented to him by the representatives of the native community of Madras. He writes :—

“ Similarly in respect of the Permanent Settlement of the vast mass, of Inam property in Madras Presidency, I am glad to have this opportunity of saying that the chief credit for the successful completion of this “important administrative measure” is undoubtedly due to the admirable native agency it was my good fortune to



employ. I do not hesitate to say that this great work could never have been accomplished at all by a single European officer but for the deep insight into native character, the intimate knowledge of landed tenures, the eminent ability, and the indefatigable industry which my native assistants, men of known character and undoubted integrity, brought to bear upon it."

To each of the Special Assistants was found work that particularly harmonized with talents and temperament. Ranga Charlu had a genius for organisation, a head for figures, a clearness of intellectual vision, that tackled the most intricate problems, unbiassed by sentiment or prejudice. To him was entrusted the genial task of drawing up the rules for the guidance of the administrative machinery and drafting all the more important correspondence with the Government. Mr. Taylor thus refers to the services of Ranga Charlu :—

"Whatever he may have owed to me for a helping hand at first starting or for subsequent advancement in the public service was amply repaid by steady and untiring devotion. Throughout the whole of our official intercourse, his intimate knowledge of native character, his excellent judgment, his wonderful capacity for affairs and his able, ungrudging assistance were always at my disposal. I attribute to his constant and ready help, in short, whatever of success I may have accomplished in the several measures with which we were associated."

If Ranga Charlu's labours in the Commission



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came, owing to the force of happy circumstances, more prominently into notice, Sashiah's were by no means less arduous. To him fell the responsibility of controlling the head-office—an establishment of over 250 clerks, of making the wheels of the machinery move without jarring, of conciliating and dismissing with satisfied hearts the large class of Inâmdârs, who came with grievances to be redressed. This work demanded a deep insight into human character, a delicate appreciation of and adjustment to the motives for conduct and tactful resource in trying conditions. These requisites Sashiah Sastri possessed in abundance and they contributed in no small degree to the unhindered progress of the work. Before he became Special Assistant, Sashiah Sastri had, as Inâm Deputy Collector, registered 50,000 original Inâm claims. He had, then, had opportunities of noting that the Commission was an object of suspicion to the Inâmdârs in general. He tried to secure their co-operation. Writing to Mr. Taylor on the 28th August 1859, he says:—

“I really find it very difficult to persuade the Inamdars to believe that the Inam Commission is come for their good. For they seem to be determined to believe that it cannot be so. They think that what I say is too good to be true. However I am trying my best to make myself believed—

and them to understand the nature of the benefits proffered by the Government."

After he became Special Assistant, he more than ever set his heart on reconciling the Inâmdârs to the step taken by the Government. And he succeeded. It was not considerations of policy alone that determined him to this course. He was, as has been already remarked, in genuine sympathy with a large section of the Inâmdârs—the Pandits. He wished to do as much good to them as was consistent with his duty to the Government he served. He loved to talk with them and learn from them. He had with him Pandits in whose society he spent his spare hours chatting on religion, philosophy and Sanskrit Literature. His love for them, as much as a graceful manner that marked all his movements, secured results that an unsympathetic course of policy might have failed to achieve. It was part of his duty to visit the several districts to collect information regarding the Inâm tenures and to draw up instructions for their settlement under the general Rules. He himself had to review about 2,50,000 titles that had been registered by the Deputies and in the course of reviewing their work and hearing petitions from the aggrieved parties he came in contact with a great many Inâmdârs of the Pandit class. He heard them



patiently—with a patience that is born of sincere sympathy—met all their reasonable wishes and seldom failed to put them in good humour.

Seven years of this busy life—two years of wandering, one year at Palamanair, a sanitarium in the North Arcot District, one year at Vellore and the last years at Coimbatore—a hard, exacting life with little time for social enjoyments. There was Ranga Charlu, his early schoolmate and friend and now his colleague with whom a few spare hours could be pleasantly and profitably spent. Ranga Charlu, habitually pre-occupied with his own thoughts, cared little for the amenities of social life. But Sashiah, with his endless fund of humour and brilliant powers of conversation, often succeeded in drawing him out of the seclusion of his thoughts and many were the hours they spent together in pleasant and edifying chats.

When the Commission was nearing the close of its labours, the India Government appointed Mr. Taylor to the special duty of enquiring into and reporting on the working of the Indian Railways ; and in this new sphere of work which required an intimate knowledge of accounts, Mr. Taylor took Ranga Charlu with him to Calcutta, as his assistant. Mr. Blair was appointed in



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

Mr. Taylor's place as he was considered a safe and steady officer fit to carry on the remaining work undisturbed. Mr. Chentsal Rao, a very capable officer and one of the Deputy Collectors already in the Commission, was made a Special Assistant and Sashiah with his new colleague worked with a will and brought the work of the Commission to a successful completion.

The last years of the Commission were spent at Coimbatore. It was while he was here that Sashiah lost two of his brothers. Madhava Rao who had by this time risen to be the Dewan or Minister of Travancore, wrote to Sashiah on the 21st November 1864 :—

“ I am very sorry indeed to learn that domestic affliction has fallen so heavily on you. The loss of a brother I can well imagine the effect of, as I have had sad experience of it. Yours seems to be a greater trial as you have had the misfortune to lose two brothers in so short a time.”

It was indeed a heavy blow to him. The instinct of family ties has ever been very strong in him. He loved his brothers with rare affection. The eldest of them had, in very early life, gone to Benares as a pilgrim, there renounced the world and became a Sanyasin. The rest had married and become the heads of large and growing families. It was Sashiah that supported all these families and bore the cost of educating



the younger members, of marrying and settling them in life. He himself was childless but loved his brothers as himself and their children as his and all that he earned was ungrudgingly spent in bringing up the large family of which he had become the sole bread-winner. The idea of a *sacrifice* on their account never entered his head. It was with him a matter of love and duty.

When the Inâm Commission was winding up its work, Sashiah wished to have a little respite from hard work and besought the Government to send him as a Deputy Collector to Tanjore, his native District. His mother was getting old and infirm and having but a short time before her desired to spend her last days in her native village Amarâvati; and Sashiah wished to be within an hour's run so that he might see her as often as possible, look after her comforts and be ready, at the shortest notice, to be with her in her last moments to close her eyes. The Government were pleased to grant his prayer and in 1865, the Gazette announced his appointment as the Treasury Deputy Collector of Tanjore. But it had to be merely a paper appointment for nearly a year. Mr. W. T. Blair was new to his work and would not part with Sashiah till he should have drawn up the draft of the final report of the results of the Inâm Commission. Accordingly



Sashiah had to stay on and work at the report. Meanwhile his *locum tenens* at Tanjore was reaping a golden harvest, which should legitimately have been Sashiah's. The Treasury Deputy Collector was then *ex-officio* District Registrar of Assurances. This office had just then come into being and it was ruled that all documents, bonds, &c., should be registered before a certain date; otherwise they would cease to be valid. Documents poured in, in thousands, for registration and as the Registrar was then paid by a commission fixed on a liberal scale, the Registrar was able to earn large sums which meant a small fortune. Thus while looking on the chances which he was losing he stuck to his work as a matter of duty and finished the work entrusted to him by April 1866 when he started for Tanjore to take charge of the Treasury.

Mr. G. N. Taylor writing to Sashiah in 1896, thus acknowledges his services:—

“My assistants as you know were trusted comrades in the work of the Commission and my confidence was amply repaid by them all. To their able and devoted labours—and especially [to the untiring zeal and great ability of Ranga Charlu and yourself—is entirely due the gratifying success of the undertaking.”

Even more gratifying than the recognition of his work by his superiors was the warm acknowledgment of his unfailing courtesy and tact



by those immediately under him, who, on the eve of his departure to Tanjore, presented him with a farewell address and a silver plate. The following extracts from the address deserve quotation :—

“ It is impossible for us to do justice, in a brief address like this, to your varied and brilliant accomplishments and the noble qualities that adorn your invaluable life. Learning and merit, especially struggling with adverse fortune, have always found in you an ark of refuge ; and there has been no occasion on which you did not readily sympathize with the distressed. Your almost parental affection towards all of us and your sincere solicitude for our welfare are without parallel. Where shall we find that never failing cheerfulness, that humorous disposition, that penetrating intelligence and that refined and instructive conversation with which we have been diverted and instructed ? The mildness of your temper, the affability of your disposition and the kind and impartial treatment always manifested towards us, without any regard to caste, creed or colour—all these leave a lasting impression in our mind.

It is not our province to dwell on your bright career in the Public Service either in the Northern Circars or in the Inam Commission where you have contributed with all your might and main to its successful termination. Your exemplary life more than anything else tended to mould our character. We have learnt earnestness, perseverance in the work at hand, straightforwardness, scrupulous attention to the discharge of our official duties and faithfulness and loyalty to Government, by your noble example.”



CHAPTER VI.

FROM THE VENNAR TO CHEPAUK.

Sashiah Sastri stayed at Tanjore for three years. As Deputy Collector his pay was Rs. 600 and as Registrar of Assurances he had a consolidated allowance of Rs. 150. Tanjore has always been the wealthiest District and has contributed the greatest share to the Revenues of the Madras Government. Accordingly the Government were careful to select the best officers available for the District. As Mr. G. Banbury, the officiating Collector, wrote in the Settlement Report of the Tanjore District for 1865-1866, "Government have, doubtless, bestowed considerable care upon the selection of the native Deputy Collectors for Tanjore and the manner in which these officers perform their work proves how wise and how happy the selections have been."

Soon after Sashiah entered upon his new duties he saw that things had been left for years in great confusion in his office. Order and system had ever been as the breath of his being and he could not rest till he had brought things to a shipshape style. This was however no great work for one who was past master in the art of



creating order out of chaos. In one short year, the Collector Mr. G. L. Morris was able to write to the Government in his Fusli Report for 1866-1867: "Sashiah Sastry, the Treasury Deputy Collector, is a first-rate officer and bears an unblemished character. His office which used to be in great confusion has been brought by him into admirable order and I consider myself most fortunate in having him in my District and at my Head-quarters." Restoring order, though not work of a very high order, was yet something and kept him engaged for a time. After a while even this ceased and he had little to do. A brief spell of rest was welcome after years of incessant toil. But absolute inactivity soon began to pall upon him. As the Treasury work was reduced to a routine he longed for some interesting work. And he found it.

He was appointed Vice-President of the Municipality of Tanjore. Dr. Ross, the District Surgeon, was the President. Having enough work of his own he had hardly time to spare for municipal matters. He found in Sashiah a willing and earnest coadjutor and gladly left in his hands the management of municipal affairs.

The sanitation of the town was in a bad way. The roads within the municipal limits were hardly worth the name. The drains were cess-pools of

abominable filth—the breeding ground of the famous Tanjore mosquitoes. These were altogether of a very superior breed—*par excellence* in their own department—fattening on the inexhaustible wealth of dirt and spreading the seeds of disease—especially elephantiasis—in all directions. The town was shut in on all sides by the walls of the Fort ; free circulation of air was arrested and the sluggish, pent-up atmosphere of the town was a fruitful source of disease. The wells of the town as well as the tanks of the palace were supplied with drinking and bathing water from the Sivaganga tank—a fresh water reservoir within the Little Fort. This water was distributed by means of masonry conduits that had not been looked after for centuries. Over these ducts, in many places, ran the sewers of the town. Through long neglect and the wear and tear of years, the conduit works had become damaged here and there and communication had been established at several points between the sewers above and the conduits below. The sewage waters thus found a ready outlet into the ducts below, and the people of the town drank the contaminated water unsuspectingly.

Sashiah found a regular Augean stable to cleanse and he set about it with his usual energy. The work however meant a considerable outlay



of funds. As the cost of the maintenance of Hospitals and the Town Police was then a charge on the Municipal Funds, the funds actually available for sanitation were limited. The subject was brought to the notice of Government. Other Municipalities also joined in the representation—with the result that Municipalities were relieved of these charges and thus large sums were released for *bonâ fide* municipal purposes. Large funds were now available for the conservancy of the town and Sashiah commenced sanitary improvements with characteristic promptness. Under his personal supervision and control the roads within the town were metalled. The conduits were laid open, thoroughly cleaned and repaired. The drains were cleansed out of the accumulated filth of years and regularly flushed. The Fort walls were breached in all directions, to let in fresh air into the streets. The rank vegetation that had grown on the ramparts of the Sivaganga fort was cut down. The tangled mass of prickly pear and bushes which filled up the approaches of the town and which also overran the deep moats around the Fort were extirpated.

All this fairy work was due to the impulse given by a personality that throbbed and pulsated with life and warmth ; the credit generally goes,



in the convention of red-tape expression, to a system, in this case—the Municipality. But the system had existed and the evils by its side and a succession of let-alonists had winked at the evils and let them grow : and the system before it grew and showed fruit needed the cunning hand of a skilled and devoted labourer.

A large sum had accumulated in the Treasury in the shape of road-cess. Sashiah drew the attention of Mr. G. L. Morris, the Collector, to this sum awaiting disposal and suggested that it might be utilised, in accordance with the intentions of Government, for the repair of the roads in the District. This did not lie within the province of Sashiah ; but his work within the municipal limits was nearly over and he was not the man to sit by with folded hands and take his ease. Mr. Morris commended the suggestion and looked to Sashiah to carry it out. And Sashiah took up the work.

The District of Tanjore is a flat country with alluvial soil and the public roads were no better than fair-weather cart tracks. Sashiah set about providing the District with a network of metalled roads. The road from Tanjore to Trivadi, that from Needamangalam to Kumbhakonam and Mannargudi, from Tiruvalur to Mayaveram and Tirutturaipundi were taken up one after another



and metalled and still form the main metalled roads of the District. A short road from Tanjore to a much frequented shrine Mariammankovil, a distance of two miles, was also metalled, the wealthy *Mirasidar* of Poondi contributing a part of the cost.

But all this work he carried out as a labour of love and it was really to him a relief from the dull monotony of Treasury work. The house he lived in was a palatial mansion on the bank of the Vennar, a couple of miles away from the Fort. Long untenanted and uncared for it was in disrepair. Sashiah put it in order and fitted it up in decent style at his own cost. In the evenings after he returned from office, he would stroll along the sands of the stream, with a select friend or two, chatting with them and delighting them with his sparkling wit and humour. On moon-lit nights he would stretch himself at full length on the fine, white undulating sands and give himself up to the enchantment of the hour and the scene. On Sundays he gave a few hours to his Sanskrit Pandit. In this wise sped three happy years.

Towards the close of this period his old mother died at Amarāvati. She had clung to her native village with great tenacity, determined to give up her last breath there. Sashiah, during her

last illness, generally took a hasty run to the village in the evening and returned to the Treasury next morning at 11. He was thus able to soothe her in her last days by those personal attentions which form the most acceptable offering from a son to the mother. He placed a heap of money by her death-bed, (thus literally fulfilling the promise he had made as a boy when parting with her) that she might give it away, as she pleased, to those who were by her side. The mother had lived to see her son grow to be the pride of her family and country and she died full of years and honour and her favoured son had been "blessed to be at hand to give the soothing word and act needed."

In 1868, Sashiah was appointed a Fellow of the University of Madras. Though his other and more pressing duties often prevented him from taking a very active part in the deliberations of the Senate, he has ever evinced a genuine interest in the cause of education and has justified his nomination by the fillip he has given to the cause and the encouragement he has shown to educated men in whatever capacity he happened to be employed throughout a long and distinguished career.

In 1869, Jayaram Chetty, the Head Sheristadar of the Board of Revenue, died. The appoint-



ment was offered to Sashiah as in the opinion of the Board, "the claims and qualifications of Sashiah Sastry were superior to those of any other candidate for the office." But Sashiah was not eager to take up the post. One reason for his reluctance has been clearly stated in a letter from the Board Secretary to the Madras Government, dated the 25th November 1870. The following extract from the letter refers to it :—

"When Jayaram Chetty died, the Board selected their present Sheristadar, A. Sashiah Sastry, as the fittest and ablest member of the Uncovenanted Service and offered him the post. He refused it at first and afterwards accepted it with great reluctance.

"The reason of this is obvious. He was then as Treasury Deputy Collector of Tanjore, drawing (inclusive of Registration fees) Rs. 750 a month. He had served Government 21 years and was 40 years of age. At his time of life the prospect of an increase in salary after 5 years was of most uncertain value, and, in the meantime, the expense of setting up an establishment in Madras and the enhanced cost of living there, made loss inevitable. His salary is now only Rs. 50 more than it was in Tanjore and his expenses must be at least Rs. 150 greater."

There was another consideration which was at least as powerful. His life at Tanjore had been a happy and peaceful one. The storms all weathered, he thought he had shot into port at a well-havened isle 'where tempests never beat nor billows roar.' There were few places then open



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

to natives in the Government service, that carried much higher emoluments. He had never valued money for money's sake. Writing to Mr. E. B. Powell, he says :—

“ I had no desire to hoard money at any period of my life. I brought up a large family of nieces and nephews. I generally spent liberally and lived well. Not a rupee of my money went in a wrong direction and much of it went to poor schoolboys and to charitable institutions.”

The only inducement to take up the Board Sheristadarship was the *prestige* attached to the place as “ the highest to which a native can rise under this Government.” But the *prestige* alone was a poor recompense for the increased responsibilities. If it could lead to something higher eventually it was worth while going in for the heavier duties ; but the chances of such a contingency were, to say the least, problematical.

His friends, however, thought otherwise. They urged him to accept the place. This is, for instance, what Ranga Charlu wrote :—

MY DEAR SASHIAH,

You have after all disappointed me in your promise of meeting me at Madras. I am receiving letters from various quarters (amongst our native friends I mean) wishing to know my intentions in regard to the vacant appointment in the Board. I am told the offer will be made to you first and I wish you to accept it as it may lead to something else hereafter. You cannot afford to shut yourself up in Tanjore and if you are at Madras there may be some chance of our



FROM THE VENNAR TO CHEPAUK.

CSL
145

coming across each other sometimes. Having now only made up my mind to close my public career here * I have no thought of changing it so soon and cannot be permitted to do so even if I wished. Do please take up the appointment. You must be stirred out of your long repose. You cannot be suffered to lose yourself in that retirement. Madras wants a respectable native public and I think it will be more pleasant work than the Treasury.

Yours ever affectionately,
C. RANGACHARLU.

MYSORE, {
8th July 1869. }

But his inclinations did not count in the matter. No option was left to him. Writing to Sir Alexander Arbuthnot, Sashiah thus refers to this event:—

“ In 1869, however, I think it was decided between yourself and Mr. Holloway that I must be appointed Board Head Sheristadar, which then became vacant. I was at first unwilling to leave Tanjore which was my native District and in which I wished to remain. But my acceptance of the Board Sheristadarship was insisted on as a matter in which I had no option and I joined the Board in 1869 as Sheristadar, having begun my service there just twenty years back as a clerk under Mr. (late Sir Thomas) Pycroft, Secretary, and Mr. Roupell, Sub-Secretary.”

The Revenue Board wrote to the Government in 1866 that the salary of the Head Sheristadar should be increased from Rs. 800 to Rs. 1,000.

* At Mysore of which he was in a few years to become the distinguished minister.

X 12



The Government approved of the recommendation of the Board, observing that the increased salary of Rs. 1,000 was not larger than was required "in order that the post of Sherishtadar to the Board of Revenue might continue to be an object of ambition to the ablest native officials and to command the highest qualifications"; but they considered that the higher rate should be given only after five years of *approved* service, and on the special recommendation of the Board.

It was more interesting work than the charge of the Treasury and Sashiah was pleased with the change. His intimate knowledge of Revenue questions and his varied experience in the several Districts now stood him in good stead. His Reviews of the Annual Reports of the Districts were searching and thorough and the Collectors were made aware, sometimes unpleasantly, of the fresh blood in the Board. Mr. J. Grose, Secretary to the Board, a gentleman of an extremely amiable disposition and genial sympathies, soon came to appreciate Sashiah's exceptional talents and often used to wish that he had a fourth of Sashiah's experience. All important drafts that had to be drawn up by the Board were entrusted to Sashiah, who threw into the driest of details such interest and attractiveness, such a subtle



charm of style and manner, that his drafts are to this day admired and eagerly read by all aspiring novitiates. The members of the Board saw the work of their native Assistant and one of them Mr. (afterwards Sir) William Robinson proposed that Sashiah should sit with them during their deliberations ; but the idea had to be dropped as the constitution of the Board did not allow of such a step. They had however such regard for him that it was no uncommon sight to see the members going down to his office in the ground floor when they had to consult him.

The members saw that the salary he was drawing was absurdly low for one of his qualifications, and in 1870 they wrote to the Government :—

“ It seems to the Board to be scarcely logical or in accordance with the policy pursued by Government in the case of all other appointments, to pay the same man at different rates for the same work, merely because he performs it for a stated time. They are thoroughly satisfied with Sashiah's work at the present time and they are certain that it will be neither greater in quantity nor better in quality after he has been in their office for 5 years.

“ The Government have attached the condition of *approved service* in the Board's Office to the higher rate of pay. In the case of a man chosen, as the Board's Head Sheristadar must be chosen, after a long and distinguished career, the *approval* is certain and any further probation is unnecessary.



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

"The Board earnestly hope that Government will see fit to make the salary of the Head Sheristadar of their office Rs. 1,000 a month unconditionally."

This application was recommended to the favourable consideration of the Secretary of State through the Government of India. The Secretary of State passed the following order thereon :—

INDIA OFFICE, LONDON,

13th July, 1871.

"I have considered in Council the Despatch from your Excellency in Council.....with which you transmit your Proceedings on the proposal to fix the salary of the Sheristadar of the Board of Revenue at Rs. 1,000 a month at once, without the condition of five years' approved service.

The reasons adduced for this increase are sound, and in reply to an application from H. E. The Governor-General in Council, I have sanctioned it."

Accordingly Sashiah's salary was raised to Rs. 1,000 unconditionally. The recognition was peculiarly gratifying to Sashiah; for the change of policy which resulted in the removal of the condition of five years' approved service was entirely due to the influence of *his* personal worth.

The work in the Board was arduous and exacting; but it was congenial. Sometimes when there were heavy arrears to clear off he sat up the whole night, the pen busily travelling over the sheets of paper, and by day-dawn the huge pile of papers was found to have been satisfac-



terly disposed of, and like Oliver, though in a different way, he hungered 'for more.' But whatever work he did, he was only one spring out of the many that regulated the movements of the huge machinery of the Board; and his particular share, though it always carried with it the stamp of his individuality, must remain merged and undistinguished in the whole.

For the rest, his life at Madras was calmly, peacefully happy—passed in intercourse with kindred spirits. There was Mr. Holloway, now a Judge of the High Court, through whose influence he had been introduced into the Board. Almost every evening, after office-work, the two used to meet and stroll along the beach for near a mile, keeping up between them a singularly stimulating conversation, which, for want of a Boswell, must for ever be left unrecorded. There were also some of his early school-fellows and friends who had all risen to high places and who were now by a fortunate combination of circumstances, brought together at Madras, each filling an honored place. T. Muthuswami Aiyar was Police Magistrate. V. Ramiengar was Superintendent of Stamps. Chentsal Rao was Salt Deputy Collector. R. Raghunatha Rao was Deputy Collector of the City of Madras. They all lived at Mylapore, a few doors off one another.

They invariably met in the evenings, often at Muthuswami Aiyar's. What fun and merriment there must have been in these meetings! Twenty years or further back most of them had left Madras in quest of their destiny and now they found themselves there once more, in the prime of life, having spent the interval in different places and divers occupations, spent with honour to themselves and credit to their Alma Mater, and infinitely thankful to God for having taken care of them so well. Three of them were yet to make their mark in life as distinguished statesmen and one as a conscientious Judge and brilliant jurist. Meanwhile they were there together, making the most of their happy fellowship.

This delightful period was destined to be short-lived. In April 1872 Sashiah was summoned one morning to the Government House at Guindy and the *ad interim* Governor—Sir Alexander Arbuthnot—asked him if he would accept the Dewanship of Travancore then vacant by the retirement of Sir Madhava Rao. Sashiah hesitated—he almost declined. But Sir Alexander advised him to think over it and let him know, adding that the refusal of the Dewanship of Travancore carrying with it Rs. 2,000 a month, did not come twice to any one. He went home and consulted his friends. They pressed him to



accept the offer, if it were only to keep up the prestige of Powell's boys. He went next morning to the Governor and intimated his assent. Accordingly Sashiah's services were placed at the disposal of His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore.



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CHAPTER VII.

IN THE LAND OF CHARITY.

“Travancore is,” in the words of Sashiah Sastri, “certainly one of the most picturesque portions of Southern India, if not of the whole of India. The mountains which separate it on the east from the British Provinces of the Coromandel Coast, and which at some points rise to an elevation of 8000 feet above the sea are clothed with magnificent primeval forest while the belt of flat country to an average distance of about 10 miles from the sea inland is covered with an almost unbroken and dense mass of cocoanut and areca palms, which constitute the wealth of the country. The geological formation is very peculiar; the whole country is undulating and presents a series of hills and valleys and is traversed east to west by numerous rivers, the floods of which, arrested by the peculiar action of the Arabian Sea on the coast, spread themselves out into numerous lakes or lagoons, connected here and there by artificial canals, and form an inland line of smooth water communication which extends nearly the whole length of the coast, and is of the utmost value while the



coast itself is shut out for navigation during the monsoon."

Of this blessed land and its ruler Sashiah Sastri now became the ^{Chief} minister. V. Rama Aiyangar also had been thought of at the time in connection with the Dewanship; the then First Prince, Vizagam Tirunal, had, in fact, strongly supported his nomination to the Maharajah and but for the decided hostility of the ruler to everything proceeding from the First Prince V. Rama Aiyangar's appointment as the successor of Sir Madhava Rao would have become an accomplished fact. When Vizagam Tirunal, however, succeeded to the throne he made Rama Aiyangar his minister. As Sashiah Sastri writes to a friend on the subject :—

"V. Ramiengar ought to have got it before me and was very near it in the race. But God then willed it otherwise. He now gets it though out of turn. Yet it is all the same. He will now get two pensions—one from the British Government where he has served his time and one from Travancore. May Heaven spare him long and give him good sense to be popular!"

Sashiah Sastri reached Trevandrum about the 20th of May 1872 and was immediately installed as Dewan. His predecessor in office Sir Madhava Rao wrote to Sashiah :—

"Let me now heartily congratulate you on your appointment as Dewan of Travancore. All compliments apart, I



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

am sure no better selection could have been made in the interests of His Highness and those of his subjects."

Sir William Robinson, Senior Member of the Revenue Board, wrote in 15 February 1873 :--

"I had heard that you had accepted the office of Dewan to H. H. the Rajah of Travancore while in England and learnt it with great pleasure. For though we miss you in the Board much, I consider the post you have, as quite the highest open to natives in this Presidency. For *there* you are truly a native *ruling* your own countrymen.

Under British Rule this can never be, though much do I long—and without fear,—to see natives with a more potential voice in the governing of the country.

I know that in the Rajah you have a considerate high-minded man well worthy of your devoted service and I feel assured that he has in you one both worthy of his confidence and sure to earn his confidence and the good account of his subjects. May God in His wisdom guide you!"

The first year was to be a period of probation. His Highness the Maharajah, before confirming Sashiah Sastri in office, wished to make sure that his relations with the Dewan would be smooth and free from friction. He had not got on well with his former Dewan Sir Madhava Rao, especially towards the last years of the Dewanship. The reason was not far to seek. His Highness was possessed of a strong individuality. His capabilities were of no mean order. He was well-read, knew several languages, was a good Sanskrit scholar, devoting much of his leisure



to literary discussions in the company of his Pandits, wrote and spoke English with a fluency that was at times very striking. He was well informed on the events of the day. Scrupulously punctual in his engagements, he was well posted in the details of administration, and wished to hold its main strings in his own hand. He seldom brooked contradiction. He now wished for a minister who could both govern well and yield graciously—a combination seldom compatible and certain to break down in the long run. Meanwhile he would try Sashiah.

Sashiah Sastri bade fair to render the risky experiment successful. He combined tact with ability and principle.

One or two incidents that happened at the commencement of his administration may be here narrated as showing his resourcefulness, whereby he came unscathed out of trying situations and vindicated his principle,—scoring his point against his master, but at the same time reconciling him to the discomfiture.

There was a Telugu Brahman who had by dint of long waiting secured the favour of the Maharajah. The poor man's ambition was to get a Sirkar appointment which might carry with it some dignity and some authority, though he was innocent of any kind of literary qualification. The



Maharajah had once or twice tried to give him a place during the time of Sir Madhava Rao; but the minister, who had for sometime past declared open war with his master and had no thought for his feelings, had sternly set his face against the inclination of the ruler. The matter had to rest awhile till a more favourable opportunity came. This was not long in coming. The old minister went out and the new came in—just the time when a man might be introduced, whose merits might not stand the light of a fuller knowledge of local politics. Fortunately a suitable place—or what was thought one—fell vacant about this time. A Munsiff, blind of both eyes, but learned in law, a model of a judge, upright and able, had passed away. The Maharajah appointed the Telugu Brahman to the place and to make sure of it, at least this time, granted him the sunnad of appointment and sent the required *Sadanam** to the Dewan to be granted to the nominee through the proper channel—the Sudr or Chief Court. Sashiah Sastri was out on circuit to Aleppy when the *Sadanam* reached him. He privately made careful inquiries and learnt the antecedent history of the man. He safely placed the *Sadanam* in his office-box and

* Royal Communication.



attended to more immediate and pressing work—the annual sale of the cardamoms.

A week passed and Sashiah Sastri returned to the capital. Meanwhile the exultant Brahman had taken no pains to conceal his elation on his change of fortune and in gossip circles speculation was rife as to how the Dewan was going to acquit himself; here was an opportunity of testing his mettle.

Sashiah Sastri sent for the man and questioned him as to his fitness. The Brahman made no pretence to learning. "Can you at least read and write Malayalam in which you will have to write your judgments?" asked the Dewan.

"No, your honour," replied the nominee unabashed. "Here was a man, blind of both eyes, doing all the work for twenty years and I have both. Again if the judge write his judgments, what is the *royasam* (clerk) for, I wonder? Educated men that know to read and write can get on well enough of themselves and there is no merit in heaping favours on them. Helpless men, like myself, are alone deserving of favours. If a sovereign ruler cannot do so much for me after years and years of waiting I do not know what his power or his rank is worth."

Sashiah Sastri found that the man was intelligent enough and could do well in work that

A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

required no learning. He took back the sunnad from him, assuring him that no harm would be done. Monday was generally the day for interview with the Maharajah and consultation ; and when Sashiah Sastri appeared before his master on the next Monday, the first question that was put to him was, "How is it, Sastriar, you have not communicated the Sadanam of appointment of—to the Sudr-Court? I cannot understand the delay in such a simple matter."

Sashiah Sastri pleaded more pressing duties. "And as for the Sadanam," continued he, "I beg your Highness will be pleased to tear it off."

"Tear off my own Sadanam!" exclaimed the Maharajah. "Here is a fine state of things! What is my word worth if I am to revoke it as soon as given? Oh, these Powell's boys! I wonder how Powell had the art to mould them all alike!"

"I wish and pray your Highness consulted your interests better," replied Sashiah Sastri. "To appoint a man to a place for which, on his own admission, and by the undivided testimony of all people he is entirely unfitted would go to discredit all appointments by your Highness and my administration as well. It is hard, however, that your Highness' favour should go unrewarded. I shall find means to serve the man in a fitting



manner if your Highness should cancel the order.”
“How are you going to do it?” eagerly queried the Maharajah.

Then Sashiah Sastri pointed out how for want of supervision the tens of thousands of rupees spent monthly on the Padmanabhaswami temple and the Agrasala were being mismanaged and how a man with a practical turn of mind, though with no educational qualification, might do good work in checking the abuses in the charities. The Maharajah was pleased with the eminently practical suggestion. Powell's boys now came in for praise; a new Sadanam for the new appointment was then and there written out. The Brahman hailed this more congenial work with great glee and the people saw how well the new minister could make the best of a bad bargain. It is almost needless to state that the Maharajah was delighted at the turn things had taken and all parties were satisfied that all is well that ends well!

Another instance, of a somewhat similar nature, may also be mentioned. One of the personal attendants of the Maharajah had offended the law and come within its clutches. The Magistrate found the man guilty and was about to fine him. This reached the ears of the Maharajah. His Highness was wroth that the Magistrate



showed so little consideration for one of his own attendants, sent for the records of the case, treated the Magistrate to a few choice epithets of vituperation and wrote a judgment himself, acquitting the man. The Magistrate, aghast at the arbitrary procedure of the ruler and trembling with fear, came to the Dewan and asked for advice.

Sashiah Sastri broached the matter delicately at the next royal interview and hinted that the step taken might be considered unconstitutional. His Highness fired up. "I thought," he said, "I had done with all reference to 'constitutional' with Sir Madhava Rao. I see you are another of the same ilk—only with a different name and form." The Maharajah wound up with a not very agreeable reference to Powell's stereotype and a determination not to yield this time.

Sashiah Sastri admitted that within his dominions a ruler's word must be law, that the Magistrates were simply the instruments of the ruler, deriving their power from his will and exercising it under his express authority, that therefore there could be nothing objectionable in principle in the ruler himself exercising a function which he can delegate to those under him.

All this was pleasing to the Maharajah and he listened with approval.



the records to the Magistrate and order him to proceed with the case according to law." The Maharajah did so and never cared to repeat the attempt.

At the end of the year the Maharajah signified his gratification to the Resident and his desire to confirm Sashiah. The Resident now was Mr. Ballard, Sashiah's old friend at Masulipatam. He wrote :—

"I called on the Maharajah this morning and spoke of your matter. . . . His Highness spoke very kindly of you and will speak to you and write to me soon on the subject. He seemed to approve of all I said.

So now I hope you have a long and honourable career before you in Travancore. Like all careers worth running it will have its difficulties, but I trust and believe your good sense and integrity of purpose will, with God's blessing, enable you to surmount them—to maintain an honest independence in essentials to the great benefit of the administration without forfeiting the regard of the sovereign."

receipt of this note from the Resident, Magistrate Sastri wrote to the Maharajah :—

"I allow this day's sun to set without thanking you so sincerely and warmly for a favour, which there could not have been a little while ago. The principle in the ruler himself. His Highness has been most kind to delegate to me my humble services. All this was pleasing to the Maharajah. I have the pleasure to confirm the same and to mention all of which I have been thinking the last few



weeks I thought of submitting the matter direct for your Highness' decision, but I could not muster courage to moot such a subject face to face with your Highness. I was therefore obliged to take the only alternative, that of communicating through the Resident and in doing so I felt confident that your Highness would make due allowance for the extreme delicacy of my position. Possessed of no private fortune and on the eve of quitting the service of a Government whom I have served for 25 years, I could not show or give a better proof of my entire confidence and reliance on your Highness than submitting myself to the absolute condition of vacating my present appointment any time at your Highness' bidding. I have no other ambition than that of promoting the welfare of your Highness' kingdom by carrying out in a faithful manner such instructions as it may please your Highness to issue to me from time to time and by humbly suggesting and laying before your Highness such measures as the necessities of the state call for. To continue to give me the support of your Royal countenance always is all I have to ask of your Highness and to grant me a few years of health and strength to serve your Highness well and truly is all I have to ask of the great God."

His Highness wrote in reply :—

"I was very glad to learn by your kind note of last morning that the intimation you had from Mr. Ballard yesterday was so welcome and gratifying to you. I could easily imagine the great delicacy you must have naturally felt in making a movement directly to me in so purely a personal matter. Permit me to congratulate you most heartily on this auspicious event of your being confirmed in your post so cheerfully by me; and as you have always had several substantial proofs of my having fully confided in you and afforded you my warmest support be assured you shall



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

always have them. It is really a matter of congratulation that our mutual—both political and friendly—relations hitherto have been so cordial and satisfactory and I am in full hopes of our being able to get on smoothly both to the great interests of my country as well as to the peace of my mind, as I am already convinced of your excellent ability, tact and above all your sincerely faithful attachment and true loyalty to me. I need hardly say that I sincerely appreciate all your hearty expressions and assurances in your note and I reciprocate them with the same warmth."

The Resident wrote to the Madras Government conveying the intentions of His Highness in the following letter :—

"As the period of one year for which the services of A. Sashiah Sastri were placed at the disposal of His Highness the Maharajah of Travancore as Dewan will shortly expire, I yesterday took the opportunity of a visit to ascertain His Highness' views with regard to Sashiah's retention in the Travancore service. I am happy to say that His Highness spoke very favourably of Sashiah, and a few conditions of agreement which it seemed desirable to arrange were discussed. I afterwards had a note from the Maharajah expressing his views, and requesting me to communicate with Sashiah on the subject. This I did, and have his reply.

2. His Highness will be happy to confirm Sashiah in the post of Dewan of Travancore, and Sashiah will gladly continue in the post on the following understanding :—

(1) That Sashiah holds the post of Dewan for a period of five years from the date of his first entering His Highness' service.

(2) That the engagement may be renewed afterwards according to circumstances.



(3) That if, during the period above said, His Highness desires to dispense with Sashiah's services at any time, he can do so by giving three months' intimation of his intention.

(4) That, similarly, should Sashiah, from ill-health or other cause, find it necessary to retire from His Highness' service, he shall be at liberty to do so on giving three months' intimation.

(5) That, under any circumstances above contemplated, Sashiah shall be entitled on retirement to the Dewan's pension of Rupees 500 per mensem.

3. His Highness requested me to communicate with Government on the subject.

4. The arrangement seems to me very satisfactory to the parties concerned, and likely to be highly conducive to the good administration of Travancore.

5. I believe Government will approve it, and on intimation to that effect Sashiah will be prepared to send in his resignation of his post in the Office of the Board of Revenue."

The Madras Government passed the following Order thereon, 5th April 1873 :—

"The Governor in Council considers that the proposed arrangement is very suitable, and is much gratified by learning that Sashiah Sastri has so entirely fulfilled the anticipations of Government and secured the confidence and approbation of His Highness the Maharajah."

The first year of his administration Sashiah devoted to taking his bearings. He was new to the country, new to the people and the language, new to the institutions of the land. It behoved him to look about himself before he chalked out

a definite policy for his guidance. He quietly studied the history of the country, its usages, the nature and requirements of its administrative machinery.* He found that the country which fifteen years back was almost on the verge of a collapse had been brought into admirable order by the genius of Sir Madhava Rao, that he had brought sunshine to a land that had been wrapped in darkness, that by judicious fiscal reforms the finances of the state had been placed on a stable basis, that by a series of wise reforms energetically carried out the seeds of good government had been sown, had taken firm root and sprouted into promising growth and all that was needed for some years to come was rest and watchful supervision and a few measures calculated to help on and strengthen the good work of his predecessor in office.

The resources of the state had been materially developed during the last decade and the revenue of 1871-72, the last year of Sir Madhava Rao's administration, was the highest on record, about

* His Administration Report for the Malabar years 1043 and 1049 contains the results of his study. This double Report gives a short sketch of the origin, growth and character of the sources of revenue and of the several departments which constitute the machinery of the state and is a brief and masterly review of the previous fifty years in the history of the country. The Report is, in the words of the then Resident G. H. Ballard, 'almost a Manual of Travancore,' and has been a guide to all departments of the state.



54 lacs of rupees, more than 6 lacs, for instance, over that of 1861-62. It was indeed a most gratifying result. But for several years past extraordinary contributions had been made to the revenues by unexpected sources; these had amounted in the preceding five years to about five lacs of rupees. These extra sources were not likely to recur, so that for some years to come, at any rate, the gross income would stand at a lower figure than that recorded for 1871-72.

This prospective decrease in the annual receipts was of no great consideration, being at the highest under a lac. What was much more important was that the expenditure of 1871-72 had run beyond the receipts of the year—the highest figure ever recorded and likely to be so for some years more—by more than a lac and twenty thousand rupees and the Madras Government in reviewing the financial administration of the year had hinted that the constant aim of the Sirkar “should be to maintain equilibrium and with this view to exhibit a slight surplus of income over expenditure rather than the contrary as on this occasion.” Having this in view Sashiah Sastri took timely precautions to regulate outlay so as to prevent a deficit. He saw that in the year under review the outlay on public works had been unusually heavy; that though five



lacs had been fixed as the limit of annual expenditure on *ordinary* works, the actual outlay had far exceeded the limit in the last five years and had, in fact, been on the most unstinted scale in each succeeding year. The accounts current of expenditure and the statement of progress made had fallen in arrears for some considerable time and the Sirkar had no means of knowing how much had been spent on particular works or to what extent estimates had been exceeded or expenditure incurred without estimate or sanction. To check these evils the British Resident had some-time back suggested the system of budget and allotment for the department ; but Sashiah found when he took charge of the administration that it had not been carried out. It became absolutely necessary in this state of things to introduce some means of check and measures were accordingly taken for bringing up the arrears of accounts, accounting for past expenditure by submission of *completion bills*, and enforcing the system of budget and allotments for the future. Sashiah also found it necessary to moderate the outlay on public works to a certain extent. (This was not done without departmental grumbling.) By these means and by a strict supervision of all sources of outlet, a slight surplus was secured for the year and the Madras Government con-



gratulated the Sirkar on the financial results. They wrote :—

“The Government are glad to learn from the financial report of the Travancore State for the Malabar year 1048 which closes on the 14th August 1873, that notwithstanding an estimated deficit by the transactions of the year a surplus of about Rs. 22,400 was secured by economical management of the funds in pursuance of the advice given by Government. On the whole His Excellency the Governor in Council considers the result of the financial administration of Travancore during 1048 to be very satisfactory.”

A similar small surplus was achieved in the next year (1049) as well. In 1050 the prospect of the cardamom revenue became more and more disappointing as the season advanced. The tour of the Maharajah to Madras and Calcutta, the Census established and carried out in part and the preliminary expenses on account of the *Muraijapam** involved an extraordinary expenditure to the amount of a lac and a half. The

* A course of prayer (*japam*) consisting of seven instalments (*murai*), each lasting eight days and the whole covering fifty-six days. The chanters of the prayer are Namburi Brahmans who are invited to Trivandrum through and with their religious leaders, conveyed, fed, feted and attended to *en route* at Sirkar expense. The feeding of the Brahmans is on a very grand scale. On the last day there is the *Sarrani*—distribution of money dole to all Brahmans, and after supper a very grand illumination and procession in the temple—called *Laksha Dipam* (a lac of lights) to which myriads of pilgrims come thronging from all parts of Southern India—far and near.



A. SASHIAH SASTRI.

CSL

Dewan had therefore to keep a very sharp look-out and succeeded in obtaining a surplus of a little over two lacs. In 1051 the Maharajah undertook another trip to Madras and Calcutta and the Muraijapam ceremony was celebrated, the two, between them, costing more than three lacs of rupees and remissions had to be granted to nearly a lac of rupees. With such odds against him Sashiah [was still able to make both ends nearly meet, the expenditure not exceeding the receipts above Rs. 300. The Madras Government in reviewing the administration of the year, wrote :—

“Seeing that the extraordinary items of His Highness the Maharajah’s visit to Madras and Calcutta, the Census and the Muraijapam ceremony, aggregated Rs. 3,15,549 and that remissions of revenue demand amounted to about a lac of rupees, the Governor in Council concurs with the Resident in deeming the result of the financial administration of the past year to be successful, although equilibrium was apparently attained by reduced expenditure on Public works.”

In spite of an anticipated fall, the revenue had gone on steadily increasing, so that the receipts for 1051, the last year of Sashiah Sastri’s regime, surpassed those of the most favourable years till then recorded. A large number (about 120) of very petty dutiable articles were struck out



of the export tariff as a relief to commerce generally. The export duty on *Coir* matting was also abolished as a measure of encouragement to that new branch of industry which had just taken root in the country.

More than six lacs of rupees remained on the Sirkar books as arrears of land revenue. A considerable portion was due from pauper or deceased defaulters ; a portion was on lands that had been eaten up by rivers or taken up for public works. But whether justly recoverable or not, these outstanding balances furnished a ready means for the petty officials to harass the ryots perpetually. So all demand on account of interest on these arrears was remitted on condition that they were liquidated within the end of the year 1050 ; the concession was extended for a year more as the character of the season put it out of the question to make any progress in the collection or settlement of the old balances. Meanwhile an inquiry was ordered for examining them and writing off such portions as had from various causes ceased to be justly due.

The season of 1051, which by its disastrous failure brought on one of the direst famines that have visited Southern India, left its mark on Travancore also. Both the early and the later

1876-77



rains failed to a distressing extent and the drought told seriously on the paddy cultivation in South Travancore and Shencottah and remissions, amounting to nearly a lac of rupees, were granted readily.

A long standing grievance of the holders of *Ain Zufti* lands (that is, those lands transferred from the British territory in exchange) was redressed in 1051. They had remained on the old Tinnevely tenure and were liable to the payment of Ayakat grain rent commuted at the market price of Tenkasi—a taluq in the Tinnevely District. The payment of the entire rent in kind, commuted at the price of a distant market, was causing great hardship. This was now removed by placing the lands on the same footing as the more favourably assessed surrounding lands of Shencottah proper.

The village officers, *proverties* and *maniams*, humble and low paid as they were, did a vast amount and variety of work, both important and unimportant. They constituted the groundwork of the administrative agency. They collected the land revenue, had sole charge of the Sirkar granaries, had police, maramutt and purveying work, in fact represented, within their limited sphere, almost all the functions of a well-ordered Government. Their pay was not, however, in proportion



to their constant duties and never-ending responsibilities ; but they had, by virtue of their multifarious powers, frequent opportunities of recompensing themselves for their trouble and worry and they seldom scrupled to take advantage of them. Formerly they had been held in great respect and their position had been recognised, not unwisely, as one of honour. A gradual change for the worse had come over them of late years. Sashiah Sastri saw that the first step towards real reformation was to better their status and he quietly prepared the way for the amelioration of this class of officers who, thus gradually taught to think better of themselves, might learn to treat their fellow-subjects with greater consideration.

One of the first things to engage Sashiah's attention was the inadequate scale of salaries that obtained in many of the departments of the state, especially the Revenue and the Judicial. He held very strong views on the subject. The tone of the administration depended not a little on the *men* in the service ; and to attract talent, to exorcise all thoughts of illicit gratification and to ensure cheerful and honest work no charm was so powerful as a proper and liberal adjustment of emoluments. There was little wisdom in a policy of cheese-paring economy—in effecting a



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

small saving by retrenchment, undermanning and insufficient remuneration and offering a premium to corruption and petty tyranny. With such ideas Sashiah set his heart on a general revision of salaries and establishments. But he was reckoning without his host. His master, the enlightened and accomplished ruler of the state, had, it must be stated, one weakness and that was a more than ordinary partiality for money and an aversion to all that looked like a throwing away of it; and a scheme that involved additional expenditure he looked upon with instinctive distrust. Much tact was therefore needed to bring him round, to reason, or if need were, to coax him into acquiescence. Sashiah Sastri broached the matter delicately to the Maharajah and hinted that it was an urgent measure, that if they did not take it up, the Resident might, and that in all important matters all measures of reform should originate with His Highness' Government rather than with the Resident. The Maharajah was thus induced to take the suggestion in good part and Sashiah was permitted to draw up a scheme; but the ruler soon appears to have repented of his first thoughts and wrote to Sashiah not to proceed. Sashiah Sastri wrote in reply :—

"I obtained your Highness' permission yesterday (not to hasten or carry out or commit your Highness to any



ill-considered or ill-matured scheme of increase of salaries but) simply to *draw up a memo* to show what such a *scheme* would cost on the data or rather the scale of salaries which your Highness was pleased to mention, it being of course left to your Highness to alter or improve or postpone it altogether for the present. This was all that I intended to do and I meant and understood that this was to be entirely confidential between your Highness and myself and the scheme was to be put forward or carried out according to circumstances. Although *I am new* in the administration, I thought little of this because of your Highness' extensive, deep and minute experience. And I should not have turned my attention to this subject so soon, if I did not feel that one great means of elevating the character of the administration was the putting the salaries of the superior offices in the Revenue and Judicial departments on a proper and decent footing which it is notoriously *not* at present, and if I did not also feel that we could financially *well afford* to do this while spending at the rate of twelve lacs of rupees per annum on Public works. If it is your Highness' desire, however, that the subject should not *even be considered* at present, I shall of course deem it my duty to drop it altogether and allow events to take their own course. Begging to be forgiven if I have not correctly understood the drift of your Highness' note, I crave permission to subscribe myself....."

Here the matter had to rest for a time as more pressing work intervened and engrossed the Dewan's attention.

Lord Northbrooke, the Viceroy of India, was to hold in November 1872 an Investiture Durbar of



the Star of India at Bombay for the investiture of the Begam of Bhopal and sent an invitation to the Maharajah. In compliance with the invitation His Highness determined to be present at the investiture. The Dewan had to make all the necessary arrangements for the trip and went with His Highness. The tour went off without a hitch and His Highness was pleased with the far-sighted arrangements that had been made in the several halting stations to suit his convenience. After the Durbar at Bombay the Maharajah with the Dewan and retinue went to Benares and other sacred places, performed the usual holy ceremonies and charities, several thousands of Brahmans being fed and donations being given to learned Brahmans. His Highness was then to have gone on to Calcutta; but as the cold season had just then set in with unusual severity he had to give up the idea for the time and return home, which he did on the 15th December 1872.

This tour had for a while diverted the attention of the Dewan, though the subject of revision had never for a moment escaped his mind. When once Sashiah Sastri set his heart on doing a thing he never stopped till he had it done. He never made up his mind suddenly. An idea entering his mind was allowed time to quietly mature itself and prove, by its persistent vitality under repeat-



ed attacks, its fitness to be shaped into action. But having finally resolved, he never allowed himself to be baffled. When the odds were very heavy against him, he yielded for a while, appearing to accept the inevitable; but he simply bided his time and when it came he started his idea once more and drove it to success.

In February 1873, Sashiah Sastri opened the subject once more and was asked to submit a sketch of his scheme. The Dewan, in sending up the paper, wrote :—

“.....With your Highness' permission I shall say on this occasion that I am most anxious that the salaries of the Heads of Departments and the Huzoor should be fixed liberally to ensure honest, cheerful and efficient service and cordial help to the Dewan.”

The Maharajah took a week to think over it and wrote to say that the next Malabar year—about seven months off—might well begin with the new scale of salaries. Sashiah was not to be put out by this; he wrote to His Highness in reply :—

“.....I have no objection whatever to offer to this and I hope the Resident will have none either as there are very good grounds why such a scheme involving considerable additional expenditure should be introduced at the beginning of next year, when we shall have it in our power to arrange the finances more satisfactorily than they are in the current year, with reference to the *equilibrium* between receipts and



expenditure on which the Madras Government lay stress in their Review of our Budget Estimate.”

The new year came but found His Highness still unprepared. Sashiah would not press the matter further against his masters’ inclinations. He wrote :—

“I have been honoured with both your Highness’ notes of yesterday. The question of general increase of salaries, to the superior grades of officers may afford to wait a while. It is one in which neither the Dewan nor the Resident has any *personal* interest. All of us think, suggest, advise and work for the general welfare of your Highness’ administration in which your own Highness’ interest must be the *greatest*. That administration has been, under the blessing of God, one of a progressive tendency and reflecting lustre on your Highness’ name and personal qualities. It will be doing injustice to your Highness to suppose for an instant that that tendency has diminished or come to an end. On the contrary I feel sure that everything that is necessary for the progress of reform and improvement will be done in due season and readily as at any time before, so that your Highness’ fame may *continuously* increase. I shall say no more on this subject.”

The question was dropped for six months, though whenever a fitting occasion came Sashiah did not fail to hammer at it. At last in February 1874 the Maharajah graciously yielded to the earnest solicitations of the Dewan, agreed to the scheme in principle but proposed to give effect to it with discriminating selection on the merits of



each case as it individually came up. Meanwhile the Resident might be consulted as to whether he approved of the proposed revision. The Dewan wrote in reply :—

“ I do not think it necessary to consult the Resident previously as to the proposed increases, as I am sure he will only be glad to hear of them and recognise in them a redemption of your Highness' promise made last year. The principle and scale of increment are both in accordance with the Resident's recorded views. The only difference is that instead of a wholesale increase of salaries according to a general scale and simultaneously, the same is being carried out gradually and without losing sight of the general scale or principle, with discriminating wisdom and in a manner effectually to secure the loyalty and attachment of your Highness' chief officers. I now perceive that the course your Highness is pursuing has many advantages in its favour; while a general increase showered among all alike will, like a *Sarvani*,* not be very much appreciated or make anybody particularly thankful. ”

The salaries of the Sudr Judges which stood at Rs. 1,000, 600, 500 and 400 were revised. The new First Judge's initial pay was fixed at Rs. 800 and that of the Second at Rs. 700, both to be raised eventually to Rs. 1,000. Those of the Third and the Fourth Judges were raised to Rs. 600 and 500 respectively. The salaries of the District Judges were also revised in principle

* Distribution of money in charity to all Brahmans alike—rich and poor, old and young—even to children in the womb.



though it was not possible to fix them permanently then as they had necessarily to vary with the service and qualification of each. An English clerk was added to the establishment of each Zilla Court. There were eight Munsiffs of the third class on Rs. 50. This class was abolished and all the eight were raised to the second class on Rs. 70.

The last class of Tahsildar Magistrates on Rs. 56 was similarly abolished and the minimum pay was fixed at Rs. 70. The Police Amin Magistrates on Rs. 35 and 30 had their pay raised to Rs. 50 and 40 according to length of service.

The Dewan Peishcars presiding over the four Revenue divisions, whose salaries had ranged from Rs. 350 to 500, had their pay raised up to Rs. 600 chiefly according to length of service. The Police and the Jail establishments also came in for their share of the increment.

The Huzoor Cutcherry—the establishment of the Dewān which, for division of labour, was formed into several branches—also received a general increase of salary. This was peculiarly gratifying to Sashiah, and he wrote thanking His Highness :—

“The increments to the salaries and the re-arrangements of departmental work at the Huzoor ordered by your Highness, communicated in the palace Sadanam, are all quite



correct and quite liberal and I was altogether surprised at their exactness. If I felt myself at liberty to do as my feelings prompted me on the occasion, I should have most gladly appeared and waited on your Highness the next morning to express how grateful I felt at the readiness with which your Highness received my suggestions and the liberality which characterised the promotions—which, to the parties concerned, were indeed a shower of gold. This token of your Highness' regard and confidence made me feel doubly strong in my administration of affairs...."

There were a few omissions yet and the Dewan suggested their rectification, concluding his letter thus :—

"Then the whole chapter of happy promotions which it has pleased your Highness to open so auspiciously will have been closed for the present."

The Maharajah ordered however that it might wait.

One feature of Sashiah's administration that contributed as much as any other to his success as a statesman was the encouragement he showed to worthy subordinates. He had no faith in mere abstract principles of statecraft. A perfect system of government—perfect theoretically—must fail if the men who work the machine go about their work heartless and hopeless. In Sashiah's own words, "whatever the merits of a *system*, much, if not all, of the resulting benefit must depend on the strength, character and qualifications and



status of the agency employed in working it." Sashiah readily recognised merit and with his rare powers of persuasion almost always succeeded in inducing the Maharajah to reward worth in a substantial manner. How hard he had sometimes to plead for his trusted lieutenants page after page of his voluminous correspondence with the Maharajah clearly shows. A few extracts may not be amiss here.

Writing to His Highness for a liberal pension to Mr. H. Crawford, Commercial Agent at Aleppy, Sashiah says :—

"I think that if a departure from the rule is justifiable in any case, such a case is pre-eminently that of Mr. Crawford who has for such a long period not only faithfully discharged duties involving very high trust, but has been devotedly and loyally attached to the Sovereigns of this State..... The additional charge would be but trifling compared with the ease and comfort it will secure to a servant whose best portion of life has been devoted to the Sirkar and whose old age should therefore be made as comfortable as possible."

Writing of Mr. Watts, Secretary to the Dewan, Sashiah says :—

"A man of his qualifications will be worth at least Rs. 500 per mensem in British India and we shall not be paying him too much at Rs. 400. I must beg of your Highness to understand that I write this on my own account and from my own conscience and not at all in a spirit of opposing your Highness' wishes or at the request of others....."



I am confident that he will, under God's blessing, do right loyal service to your Highness' State whether under the present or succeeding Dewans, and that that service will be fully worth Rs. 400 and more."

Of another faithful servant of the state he writes :—

"I can assure your Highness that there is no servant in your Highness' State, more honest, hardworking, able and useful and yet he is the only one who, in the eyes of the public, stands condemned as unworthy of promotion in salary Is he to be allowed to work with a broken heart which has been the result of his being systematically neglected? I must beg your Highness' pardon for venturing thus to plead strongly on behalf of a subordinate ; but I would not have done it if I did not feel certain that I was advocating a right and just cause."

His attitude towards the heads of the several departments of the state was both considerate and firm. He was ever regardful of their status, of what was due to them as persons to whom hundreds of subordinates had to look up for orders and guidance, what weight was to be attached to their opinions as based on professional training and departmental experience. But no consideration deterred him from exacting from them what was due to him as the general director of the administration. In a few departments, especially, those presided over by European officers, his firmness was on one or two occasions taken for want of cordiality and



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

appreciation ; his call for information and explanation was regarded as undue interference and some unpleasantness cropped up, much to the vexation of the Dewan and more to the prejudice of the administration.

The relation between the Dewan and Heads of Departments had not been defined in Travancore. It had varied with the personality of the minister and the inclinations and opportunities of the presiding officers.

A definite and formal enunciation of the principles guiding the relation between the Head of the Executive and the Heads of the Departments was the only means whereby all misunderstanding could be prevented. This was however a question of constitutional importance and for a satisfactory and authoritative solution required the concurrence of both the Ruler and the Resident.

The Resident now was Mr. Ballard who had learnt his first lessons in Indian administration under Sashiah at Masulipatam. Mr. Ballard cordially supported the Dewan and secured the approval, by the Maharajah, of the principles which should regulate the relation between the Dewan and the Heads of Departments. Briefly enunciated they were :

The Dewan as the Head of the administration



has the right to exercise, and in the discharge of his duties must exercise a real and practical control over all the departments of the administration. He should be kept fully informed of departmental operations and such periodical returns as may from time to time be required by the Government should be punctually submitted. The Dewan has the further right to call for explanation and information, as he considers necessary or desirable, of any sort and at any time. With regard to departmental assistance beyond routine the resources of a department are the resources of the state and must be held at the disposal of the Dewan as head of the administration and if he considers that they can be applied in one way more profitably than in another, his decision must transcend all departmental considerations, subject at an ultimate stage and in extraordinary cases, to the controlling authority under which he exercises his functions.

In forwarding a copy of the memorandum on the subject to Mr. Barton, the Chief Engineer, and to Dr. Ross, the Physician to His Highness the Maharajah, Sashiah Sastri wrote :—

“The general principles laid down by the Resident are fully approved by His Highness the Maharajah and it is the earnest desire of His Highness that they should be always borne in mind in the conduct of business.



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

For my part I need scarcely assure you of my desire and intention to give to you and to your department my confidence and cordial support.

The best means of avoiding misunderstandings is a full, unreserved and frequent expression of the wishes, wants and difficulties of the Department as well as laying before the Head of the administration the fullest possible information upon the subject discussed; and if public business is conducted in this spirit it can never happen that inquiry is resented as suspicion or a call for explanation mistaken for condemnation.

In conclusion I earnestly hope that the present notice of the subject may bear good fruit and result in establishing and maintaining that unity and harmony of action which are so essential to good administration."

The relation thus clearly defined once for all resulted in removing all friction and maintaining harmony.

The High Court (or as it was called the *Sudr*), the highest court of justice in the state, consisted of four judges—three Hindus and one Christian. Mr. Sadasiva Pillai, the schoolmate of Sir Madhava Rao and Sashiah, was the Chief Judge, having been brought in by Sir Madhava Rao. He had introduced several reforms, given a new tone to the department and engendered public confidence in the judgment of the *Sudr*. His term was now expiring and he was desirous of retiring into private life. But the work of the Court had latterly fallen into arrears, as the Christian



judge, Mr. Kolhoff, had after forty years of hard service become old and unequal to his heavy work. Sashiah's attention was drawn to the arrears of work in the Court and he immediately wrote to His Highness :—

"I beg permission to submit for your Highness' perusal two statements which I have just received from the Sudr showing the arrears of work in that Court just now. It is useless and would be invidious to inquire into the cause of this state of things, and your Highness is aware of them. It is on the other hand most important to the credit of our administration that work in the High Court should no longer be allowed to remain in this state."

"I attach great importance to the working off of the arrears, because I view it as *a debt we owe to the public.*"

Chellappa Pillai, B.A., B.L., First Judge of Aleppy, was brought into the Sudr as an additional judge to assist in clearing the heavy file. Mr. Kolhoff was retired on a handsome pension and advantage was taken of the vacancy to introduce a European Barrister-at-Law in the hope that such a measure would tend in a manifold degree to improve the tone and character of judicial administration. The Maharajah was not at first prepared to pay Rs. 1,000 to a European judge; but Sashiah Sastri was of opinion that if an outsider were to be brought in, he should be a person of decent qualifications and a couple of hundred rupees should not stand in the way if that alone



could secure a proper man. The Maharajah was brought round and Mr. Ormsby, M.A. LL.D., a Barrister-at-Law, was appointed. His Highness was desirous of giving a place in these arrangements to one for whom he entertained a particular liking, but was dissuaded by the following note :—

“As regards I can well appreciate your Highness’ tenderness of feelings and they do honour to your Highness’ heart. But it is the first duty of kings to do that which is proper before that which is only agreeable, and in the high station in which sovereigns are placed they often feel bound to do that which is painful to them and in doing so, God knows what sacrifice of personal regard and friendship they have to make in the appointment of their chief officers. The government or subjugation of self is the foundation for the just government of a kingdom. I must beg your Highness’ pardon for straying into such commonplace remarks, in a note addressed to a sovereign from whom everybody feels as if he had much to learn.”

Mr. Sadasiva Pillai was pressed to stay some-time longer, till the heavy file of arrears was reduced to manageable dimensions, so that in the next year the Dewan was able to report “the Sudr have reduced their file to 92 (against 257 at the end of the previous year) and have virtually disposed of all long-pending appeals.”

Of applications for execution of decrees many remained without any action being taken upon them. As Sashiah Sastri remarked in one of his



reports, "It is, I must confess, a strange commentary on the general results of the administration of civil justice that after going through the expense and vexation of a law suit so many judgments should be abandoned, without the parties interested taking steps to reap the benefit of their labour." The question received prompt attention and the necessary remedial measures were adopted.

The Dewan had magisterial functions and appellate jurisdiction in criminal cases. A regulation was passed towards the close of 1872, relieving him of direct magisterial functions.

The Dewan saw that much of his valuable time was taken up with attending to petty details of administration. All communication, whether in English or Vernacular, proceeding out of the Huzûr Cutcherry, could only do so under the signature of the Dewan on whom was thus imposed an amount of detail work "which had perhaps no parallel in the case of any officer holding a similar position." Sashiah Sastri wrote to the Maharajah :—

"Working at the rate of nearly 10 hours a day I find it very difficult to overtake my work. I often feel that I am neglecting really important work for drudgery ; because I have no proper assistance. I want help not for getting myself any leisure for enjoyment, but to give me time to go



about the country and to do good to the state and to the people and to attend to really important matters."

It was not long before a capable Secretary was appointed in his office to look after all routine work. A slight innovation that was introduced in the Dewan's office as an encouragement to the most successful students that passed out of the College may be mentioned here. These were taken into the Dewan's office as 'attaches' on a monthly salary of Rs. 20, and made to learn work and after training they were absorbed in the several executive departments as vacancies arose.

Among the "minor" changes he introduced might be mentioned the substitution of paper in the place of palmyra leaves. The use of paper had indeed been introduced into the Judicial and Registration departments some years back ; but the bulk of the state correspondence and accounts continued to be written on *cadjan* leaves. This was a stumbling block in the way of all improvement as it virtually shut out the multifarious benefits of printing. A year's time was allowed to prepare the way for the change and in 1874 the change was introduced in entirety without any material inconvenience being felt. Printed forms came largely into use. The system of accounts,—in fact the whole method of conducting public business—was greatly improved. The



public were not slow to follow suit. The use of paper fast became general and the iron style and the palmyra leaf, though much cheaper, came to be replaced by the pen and the foolscap.

Sashiah Sastri made an attempt to introduce a gold currency in Travancore. It was an experimental measure and bade fair to succeed. A small stock of gold bullion of 100 touch was bought from the Calcutta mint. A suitable mint was improvised for the purpose and pagodas and half pagodas were struck and issued from the Sirkar mint. The gold coins that were thrown into circulation were received by the public with great favour and of the number that were coined and sent out not one returned to the treasury. But as Sashiah wrote to His Highness, the present enlightened and benevolent ruler of Travancore :—

“I believe that soon after my back was turned on Travancore His late Highness Ayilyam Tirunal, my dear Sovereign, ordered the remaining ingots to be sent to the Chellam Valai and there I suppose they still sleep in peace.”

Salt was and is a monopoly of the state. The supply of salt is derived partly from the local pans in South Travancore and partly from Bombay. By a convention with the British Government the price of the salt sold within the state was assimilated to that of British India, and



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

According to this arrangement every time the British Government raised their monopoly price (it has risen gradually from Re. $\frac{1}{2}$ to Re. 1, Rs. $1\frac{1}{2}$, Rs. 2 and now Rs. $2\frac{1}{2}$ per maund) the Travancore Sirkar has also been raising its selling price *pari passu* and the revenue from salt in Travancore has been going up by leaps and bounds.

The Salt Department in the state was prolific of abuses. Salt was received and sold by *measure*; this system afforded great facilities for over as well as under measurement; and a low-paid and unscrupulous agency were helping themselves liberally at the expense of the Sirkar and the public. Sashiah ordered the superior officers to examine the selling depôts without previous notice; great deficits were found in several of them and the servants concerned were mulcted in the deficiency, dismissed or criminally punished. A new mode of receiving and selling salt was introduced; weight superseded measure; platform weighing machines graduated to maunds were got down for use. Salt was received by weight, issued to the different bankshalls by weight and sale from these to traders was also conducted by weight. The use of gunny bags—each bag containing exactly 2 maunds—was also introduced, in the transport, storage, issue and sale of salt. In these ways abuse and wastage



were checked, efficient control was secured over salt in transit, smuggling along the coast was prevented and the margin for plunder by the agency was minimised. Salt appointments, once much coveted, suddenly went out of favour and as Sashiah Sastri remarks in his Administration Report, "the existing incumbents have been ever since most anxious to quit that branch of the service."

The Public Works Department under an European Chief Engineer was in charge of all important works; there was at the same time another establishment, entitled the Marâmat Department, whose controlling agency was at the Huzur Cutcherry under the immediate orders of the Dewan. This latter was employed in the ordinary works, original and repairs, in connection with the public offices, palaces, and pagodas.

The imperious necessity of keeping expenditure within income had resulted in smaller allotments for public works for 1873 and 1874 and the Chief Engineer, Mr. Barton, had reported: "This is the first time in which I have to record any retrogression from the previous years in the steady, forward progress of public works."

The Dewan however was not unaware of the importance of public works. The outlay on this branch was placed on a healthy basis, consist-



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

11 | ently with other interests of the general administration. New roads, notably that of Ariankov, were opened, which tapped a large tract of country hitherto almost inaccessible and gave a fresh impetus to agriculture. New trade sprang up, where it was before unknown or exceedingly limited. The long neglect from which the irrigation works in the south had suffered attracted attention and measures were taken to repair and restore to efficiency the system of irrigation channels. Excavation of tanks was vigorously taken on hand and made satisfactory progress. All the *coils* or back-water canals were made navigable at all seasons by the unceasing attention which Sashiah paid to the back-waters which used to silt up every year with the freshes.

A great project known as the Wurunkally Barrier works had been undertaken in 1869 to complete the canal communication by which traffic, passengers as well as goods had to find an outlet by the Southern road into the neighbouring British District of Tinnevely and two tunnels had to be constructed. The scheme was estimated to cost $4\frac{1}{2}$ lacs of rupees. The then Dewan Sir T. Madhava Rao was not in favour of it and had in an elaborate memorandum demonstrated its unremunerative character. His objections had been overruled and the project taken in hand. The



work was entrusted to the Public Works Department of the state; the progress, after five years, was found to be very little and the work was handed over on contract to an European firm of contractors from Bombay, who did the work under the direction and general supervision of the Chief Engineer of the state. The tunnel contractors did not push forward their work with the speed stipulated and asked for fresh terms before they could proceed with the work. As Sashiah Sastri puts it, "Instead of a work which in 1869 was estimated to cost $4\frac{1}{2}$ lacs of rupees and expected to be completed in three years, the Sirkar found itself after five years face to face with a work which had already consumed 8 lacs, was scarcely half done—the most difficult and costly portion remaining over—which, the Chief Engineer now estimated, would cost another 8 lacs, and whose eventual cost it was not possible to ascertain with any approach to exactitude after the sad failure of estimate after estimate." The Dewan held that such a large outlay on a single and not very remunerative work was not justifiable while there were numerous works more urgent, more useful, and more promising in their character. Besides, since the projection of the Barrier works, communication by an excellent road had been opened across the



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

whole breadth of the state and this with another road then in progress diverted a great part of the traffic which was formerly crossing the Workally Barrier. In these circumstances the Travancore Sirkar thought it well to complete the Tunnel No. I then about half finished and take up the second tunnel at some future date. The Government of Madras sent down Col. Mullins to inspect and report on the progress of the work and after a perusal of his report they wrote to say that they would "not urge the Travancore Sirkar to go beyond what they now deem their best course."

A revised contract was entered into with the Bombay contractors and Tunnel No. I was finished, the work costing ten lacs of rupees.

A piece of work that Sashiah took up *con amore* and completed under his own personal supervision deserves mention here. It was the clearing of the Padmatirtham tank and the renovation of the channel that feeds it. The Padmatirtham is a sacred tank attached to the Sri Padmanabha Swami pagoda which is one of the most ancient temples to which pilgrimages are made from the remotest corners of India. It is 510 feet long, 270 feet broad and $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet deep. A bath in the tank is believed to wash away all sin and thousands of devotees resort to the sacred water for ablution and purification. But its condition



was deplorable. The water was very impure, the impurity being equalled only by its sacredness—the nastiest, holiest water within the limits of the state and even far beyond. It used to be fed by a channel—known as the Kochar channel—which takes its head from a little hill stream, above a small dam which keeps the water at a high level when the river gets low. This channel had been neglected for almost a century and been so filled up and encroached upon as to leave no traces of it in many places. It filled at one side of the big tank and drained on the opposite direction, and emerging from the tank fed many a reservoir in the palace and vicinity. But as already remarked it had been but a name more or less for years and silt and dirt of a century had accumulated in the tank and many that came to bathe went away with a heart lightened of its load of sin and a body stained with the filth and stench of its waters.

It occurred to Sashiah that he could not be doing better service to the capital of Travancore than restoring the old channel and thereby ensuring a perennial supply of pure water to the town. He accordingly undertook the restoration of the old channel and carried out the renovation successfully. The tank itself was cleansed of its silt. Three steam engines were day and night set to



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

work in baling out the water while thousands of labourers from the several taluks did by turns the work of excavation and removal of silt. When the tank had been quite drained they came upon several deep wells, which were found filled up with sacred stones, known as *salagram*, from the Gundak, whose contact was believed to confer sanctity on the waters. The undertaking resulted in a complete success and gave to the town, the temple and the palace a never-failing spring of pure water, at the moderate cost of a lac of rupees. Mr. Nagam Aiyah, B.A., F.R.H.S., a distinguished officer of Travancore, thus refers to this work in a letter written to Sashiah years afterwards :—

“To supply good water is a special privilege with you. We, people of Travancore, are specially grateful to you for many blessings conferred on the country—the Kochar channel and road being not the least of them. Padmatirtham tank of Trevandrum was a pool of festering filth in my boyhood. What a change has come upon it, by your beneficent action as Dewan! This is one of those gifts that must endure through all time.”

Another kind of work which was equally gratifying to the religious feelings of the people was the rebuilding of the tower of the sacred shrine of Suchendram. This is a famous place of pilgrimage in the state—not far from Nagercoil. The topmost storeys of the tower had been struck



by lightning about a hundred and fifty years ago and had been quite dismantled. The tower was rebuilt and renewed, though the work was brought to completion only a year after Sashiah Sastri left Travancore.

The tower of Sri Padmanabha Swami temple at Trevandrum, which had been long left incomplete, was completed. Finials plated with gold were set up over the topmost storey of the tower and the gilt spires of Sri Padmanabha became a landmark amid the green fields and verdant groves for forty miles around. This work cost a lac of rupees—an expenditure which must not be considered extravagant when we take into account the sanctity of the place and the traditions that regard the country as a trust held and administered by the rulers of the state in the name of God Padmanabha Swami.

The expenditure on temples had often formed the subject of unfavourable criticism. It was alleged that a considerable portion of the revenues of the state was diverted from its legitimate purpose and spent on the maintenance of Devasthanams. This complaint had been left unnoticed by Sashiah Sastri's predecessor in office. Sashiah Sastri showed that the most celebrated and venerated pagoda in the state—that of Sri Padmanabha Swami—has a government of its own,



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

that the lands belonging to this pagoda had been at a very remote past acquired by gift, that the revenues therefrom—amounting to Rs. 75,000—went to defray the daily expenses of the institution, that with regard to all other temples in the state, the state had no concern with their management before the year 987 when the landed property of 378 temples was assumed by the state and the management taken over, that other minor temples which had no property were also assumed about the same time, that from a comparison of the receipts from assumed lands with total expenditure it was seen that out of a total charge of 5.75 lacs, the Sirkar exchequer bore only the small sum of Rs. 62,000, that the interest of the Sirkar in respect of these institutions was for the most part only that of trustee and even were it otherwise the state was bound, as every other country in the world does, to maintain a Church establishment out of public revenue, that so far as the people were concerned the maintenance of these pagodas was a source of the deepest gratification to them from a religious point of view and they further furnished the means of subsistence to thousands of the poor of all classes.

Sashiah Sastri, as will be seen later on, did similar service to the feeding houses of the state. It is matter for thankfulness that when contact



with new modes of thought was threatening traditional religion and charity, an able and earnest champion was found to uphold the fair name and prestige of the land of charity.

The Educational Department which was already in a flourishing condition always received his warm and cordial support. A splendid pile of buildings was erected to accommodate the growing strength of the College and the new College was opened in March 1873 by His Highness the Maharajah in person. A law class for the B.L. Course was formed in the year 1874 and Dr. Ormsby, L.L.D., was appointed Professor.

The Si village schools which imparted elementary instruction in the three R's did not work satisfactorily. For indigenous teachers set up their schools by the side of Government schools and put forth their best efforts to induce the parents of boys and girls to patronise them. Their discipline was lax, so that boys might be taken away and re-admitted at the convenience of parents might suggest ; fees were levied in kind ; the system of instruction was congenial to the national taste ; the course of studies in these schools embraced astrology, vocal singing, didactic and religious poetry—subjects which were considered very useful by the parents ; so that the indigenous teachers called asans had



the education of the bulk of the youth of the country in their hands.

A plan was adopted to remedy this evil. A few *asans* by way of trial were appointed as undermasters in the Government schools; and as a concession to the feelings of the people, some of the popular subjects were allowed to be taught in the lower classes. The experiment succeeded. The native teachers being brought to the Sirkar, their influence was enlisted in the cause of the new system. All injurious competition ceased and the Sirkar schools came to be well attended.

The system of grants-in-aid was introduced. Grants were declared open to all schools, under whatever management, which taught vernacular up to a certain standard and secured an attendance of not less than 25. The schools were to be thrown open to the periodical inspection of Sirkar inspectors appointed for the purpose. A great many of these schools were in the hands of missionaries, who were and still are a very active and widely influential agency in the education of the youth of the country, especially of the lower classes, and these missionaries had long been asking for help. And the system of grants was introduced to encourage elementary education in general and to show that the Sirkar



was ready to assist all bodies engaged in the education of the youths of the country, irrespective of any other consideration. This measure was very popular with the several missions established in the state.

The museum and the public gardens once in a flourishing condition under the fostering care of an eminent botanist, Col. Drury, had latterly fallen into disorder. The museum which had been designed as a means of recreation and education to the masses was "a chaotic mass of curios;" the gardens had been more or less uncared for; and the menagerie had been left to take care of itself. "The gardens had become a jungle and the menagerie an unsavoury thing."

On the gentleman who was in charge of these departments leaving Travancore they were placed under the care of the Government High Church Chaplain of the station—Reverend Mr. Pettigrew—a very zealous and energetic Secretary.

A new museum designed and carried out under the supervision of the accomplished Government Architect, Mr. Chisholm, was built in the public gardens. It was called the Napier museum as a compliment to Lord Napier, late Governor of Madras.

Great improvements were effected both in the museum and the public gardens. Interesting



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

specimens were added to the museum. Convicts were pressed into service and the gardens were revived and improved. A flower garden and shrubberies were planted; a deer park was completed; improvements were made in the lion's den and arrangements were made for the comfortable housing of the several beasts; and handsome aviaries were constructed.

The Rev. Mr. Pettigrew in his "Episodes in the life of an Indian Chaplain" gives an interesting account of the several improvements made in the gardens—an extensive ground of about fourteen or fifteen acres, picturesque in the extreme, consisting of plain, hill and dale, to which after the day's work was over Sashiah Sastri used to drive of an evening and have a pleasant chat with the enthusiastic Secretary, who thus writes of him in the work above referred to:—

"But of all my native friends none so thoroughly attached himself to my affections as the able and incorruptible prime minister, the Honourable Sashiah Sastri, C.S.I. . . .

"An honest man is the noblest work of God."

In 1874 Sashiah was led into a spirited correspondence with the Government of India on the subject of jurisdiction over European British subjects. The question had in 1868 come up during Sir Madhava Rao's *regime* and on his



representation backed up by the opinion of an eminent lawyer J. D. Mayne, the Madras Government had come to the conclusion that jurisdiction over European British subjects did vest in the courts of His Highness the Maharajah.

In 1874 the question was introduced once more by the Viceroy who refused to recognise the position that had been admitted by the Madras Government.

The Dewan with all due respect to the Paramount power yet with firmness and in a manful tone contended that it could not be that the vast extent to which Her Majesty's Indian Empire had, by God's blessing, been able to attain and the great influence which she exercised for good in the counsels of smaller states could, of themselves, and without a cession, by express treaty, of its rights on the part of Travancore, operate to curtail any of the rights of the ruler of that state, that the smaller state could not lose any of its inherent privileges because its neighbour was great and powerful and was bound by certain treaties to protect it against any aggressor on payment of a subsidy representing the cost of a certain military force, that in the treaties, engagements and sunnuds between the British Government and the state no clause could be found that could, in any manner,



bear the interpretation of a cession, by the rulers of the state, of their right in the matter of jurisdiction, that in the face of the gracious proclamation of 1858 accepting the treaties with the East India Company and conveying to the native princes the assurance that their rights and dignity will be respected a violation of the pledge could be meant in regard to one of the oldest royal Houses in India, whose territories had never been subject to foreign rule, whose representatives had, long before the political influence of the British Government was felt, accorded to Europeans and their religion a degree of toleration unparalleled in any other state in India and who, since the advent of the English, had not only under all circumstances stood faithful to their ancient alliance but had perhaps been the foremost to profit by the example and counsels of the British Government in the spread of education, in the organisation of Government and in the establishment of laws and courts of justice working much after the model of British Courts, that the courts in the state had, each, a Christian judge,—a circumstance which had no parallel in any other native state, that the status of the Maharajah as sovereign in his own territory would seriously suffer by the proposed innovation, that the change might not be appreciated



even by the very class of persons for whose benefit it was proposed, as they had received the utmost possible consideration in His Highness' Courts, that in view of the large and fast increasing number of European British subjects as state servants or planters, a journey of several hundred miles to British Courts might be a matter of great inconvenience and distress to all the parties concerned, so great sometimes as to defeat the ends of justice.

The correspondence lasted for months; but the outcome was that the Government of India could not recognise the position taken by the Travancore Sirkar; they were therefore of opinion that so far as it concerned the principles involved the question must be considered as closed; that, however, in consideration of special circumstances affecting the state of Travancore and more particularly of the enlightened and progressive principles which were followed by the state in its judicial administration the Sirkar and not the British Government should appoint 1st class Magistrates who should be European British subjects for the trial of all cases in which European British subjects were defendants. The British Resident was invested with the powers of a Court of Session and a higher tribunal was to be the High Court of Madras.



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

Travancore has been called the land of charity and with justice. Dispersed through the state are several charitable institutions—*conjee* houses where the poorest of all classes and creeds are fed and *agrasalas* which are meant for Brahman and travellers. The Agrasala at the capital is a very large institution of its kind and there is not probably the like of it in all India. The number of persons fed daily is on an average 1500 at breakfast and the same number at supper. The arrangements for supplies, for custody of stores, for accounts, cooking and serving are perfect of their kind. The institution is an annex of the great pagoda of Padmanabha Swami and it is in the extensive corridors and galleries of the temple that the feeding takes place daily.

Abuses *will* creep in round such institutions. When supervision ~~should grow lax~~ wastage and plunder must result. Originally meant for the poor and wayworn traveller the Agrasala came to be the feeding house for the poor of a resident population also.

The institution had not been looked on with great favour by his predecessor or by the Europeans in the state. Persons in influential position had regarded it as setting a premium on idleness and expenditure under this head had formed from time to time subject of adverse criticism from



Charterers whose education, principles and feelings could not be expected to acquiesce in or approve of an arrangement by which thousands of vagrants were fed and idlers were supposed to be encouraged. Sashiah Sastri however thought differently. His mind was essentially conservative though, whenever he felt the need, he strenuously advocated progress and reform. He approached the study of all national institutions in a sympathetic spirit and he was loth to end them even where he could not mend them. But there was scarcely any necessity for the latter course as when once he set his heart on a thing he seldom stopped till it was an accomplished fact. With regard to this particular question he thought that in a land which had, from time immemorial, been famed for its liberal charity, any stinting would be subversive of all tradition, that all who came should be fed and fed well, not with the spirit of doing a thankless task, that with strict supervision waste and abuse might be minimised, that with the increasing expansion of agriculture a great many that now frequented the feeding house would take to more honourable means of livelihood. Those who were not in sympathy with the institution made it a ground of complaint that only one section of the community—the Brahmans—was benefited by the



Agrasala. Sashiah Sastri dissipated this erroneous impression by showing that in the Agrasala boiled rice was distributed to the establishments of the several palaces and to various persons—not Brahmans—to whom such grants were expressly made by royal favour from time to time, that the cost of the institutions included allowances in kind (since commuted into money payments) to various persons as marks of royal favour, that several thousands of Nairs and other Sudras who perform occasional services of various kinds, connected or not connected with the pagoda, are also fed and that 75 per cent. of the people fed at all these charitable institutions come from the southern provinces of the Madras Presidency and from Malabar and form a kind of migratory population and whenever there is scarcity there, the feeding houses are filled with the poor from those directions; and if the feeding houses had come to be the resort of the poor of a *resident* population, Sashiah Sastri held that “this, of course, is *abuse* of an otherwise useful institution and abuses, though every measure should be taken to correct and keep them under, would not surely justify their extinction.” With these ideas he wrote to His Highness :—

“I beg to inform your Highness that I propose keeping the Agrasala under my immediate orders for a year or so and



then hand it over to the control of the division. My object in doing this (which is sure to impose some additional labour on myself) is to look into the internal arrangements of the Agrasala myself and to watch personally the effect of the improvements which may have to be introduced. I feel certain that the waste and plunder is enormous, that while economy is introduced the arrangements for serving good food will give greater satisfaction."

The Agrasala was immediately taken in hand. A strict supervision was kept over expenditure and the Tahsildar in immediate charge of the establishment was enjoined to keep a strict eye on all sources of outlet. All this created ill-feeling in those who had been profiting by the laxity of discipline in the institution and the displeasure was visited, in various ways, on the head of the poor Tahsildar who thus expiated the sins of a strict attention to duty, both on his own account and vicariously for the master under whose orders he acted. Sashiah Sastri applied to His Highness for remedy, for some of the chief offenders were influential persons. He wrote to His Highness :—

"The second Tahsildar has a very disagreeable duty to perform in his honest endeavours to prevent the waste, the abuses and the open plunder which have been the rule in the Agrasala and this he cannot possibly do in the face of the great opposition and ill-feeling which the attempt has already evoked, unless he has the confidence and support of your Highness, through the head of the administration. This



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

confidence and support he knows he enjoys and he is therefore exerting himself to put down the abuses."

Side by side with the prevention of waste and reduction in the expenditure, great improvement was effected in the quality of food served. Those who resorted to the feeding house were now treated to better and more wholesome preparations and even those whose self-respect would not allow them to be seen within the walls of the Agrasala were now and then, it is believed, tempted to vary the monotony of home meals by participation in the public supper of the bountiful Sirkar.

The great famine of 1876-77 drove thousands of helpless Brahmans with their wives and children to the land of charity. Travancore herself felt to some extent the effect of the failure of the rains, but it was no time to think of her curtailed resources when thousands of half-starved men, women and children had come to her gates for succour, drawn by her fair name for unstinted charity. The Dewan provided for them all and considerate arrangements were made to feed the numberless mouths. The arrangements met with the entire approbation of the Maharajah. The Maharajah had a particular leaning towards saving and economy; and the Dewan was diffident with regard to the scheme he submitted for



the Maharajah's approval; but charity runs in the blood of the rulers of Travancore. Time out of mind, Travancore had kept open house for all comers and the Maharajah, though in other matters money might be a consideration with him, had inherited the instinct for hospitality and gladly welcomed all who came. It was a source of deep thankfulness to the Dewan that Providence had made him the humble instrument whereby thousands of lives were saved out of the terrible clutches of famine. The following note of the Dewan to the Maharajah is worthy of insertion as showing his genuine feelings on the occasion :—

“With very much diffidence I despatched my memorial of this morning. How soon and in what manner have my fears been converted into joy! Your Highness threw open Annapúrṇa Chatram and rained food on thousands of hungry, starving souls whom famine drove over the Ghats.

God in turn opened the floodgates of Heaven and is blessing us with abundance of rain over the land of charity.

* * * *

Charity, like mercy, is twice blessed—it blesseth him that gives and him that takes.”

Sashiah was the first minister to take a ruler of Travancore outside the limits of the Madras Presidency. Mention has been made of the first trip of the Maharajah in 1872 to Bombay to attend a Chapter of the Star of India and thence to Ben-



ares and other places. On that occasion the Maharajah had been personally invited by the Viceroy to Calcutta ; but owing to the unusual severity of the cold season at Benares, which brought on the Maharajah an attack of catarrh, the Maharajah had to return home from Benares. In January 1875 the Maharajah undertook another tour to redeem the promise he had made to Lord Northbrooke. This trip lasted for a month and a half and covered all noteworthy places in Northern India. On this occasion Sashiah Sastri made the personal acquaintance of the Viceroy and the chief officers of the Government. They were all taken up with his culture and breadth of views. His conversation, in particular, charmed one and all of them. It was on this occasion that being invited for a Government Ball given by the Viceroy he engaged His Excellency in a conversation which lasted an hour and which so kept the Viceroy enthralled that his guests began to wonder what there could be in "a native" to fascinate him so much and even make him neglectful of his duties as a general host. Sir Charles Aitchison, then foreign Secretary, entered into a long conversation with Sashiah and is said to have remarked that he had never heard a native of India talk English so well, with such purity of accent and idiom.



It may be here mentioned that Sashiah's conversational powers are of no mean order. His chaste and idiomatic English, his felicity of expression, the genial flow of his talk to which his slight stammer adds, if anything, a grace and an interest, the breadth and variety of his information, a refined humour that adds a subtle flavour to all he says, the ease and dexterity with which he scents the mood of the hearer and gives an apt turn to the course of conversation—have been the wonder and delight of all who have had the fortune to hear him converse. It is said of him that while once on a visit to Mysore he sought an interview with the Resident, Colonel Oliver St. John, who was not known to be lavish of attention to Indian visitors. The Resident happened at the time to be engaged with other European officers in some important business. He asked them to wait for a few minutes and receiving Sashiah told him, to begin with, that he had only a very few minutes to spare. The first question he put was whether Sashiah could talk English. "Yes, a little," replied Sashiah. But once under the charm of Sashiah's talk the Resident forgot his engagement and the speeding of the minutes and it was more than an hour when much loath he parted with Sashiah with the warmest feelings and a pressing request to call



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

once again. Sir Henry Stokes, one of the ablest and most energetic councillors that the Madras Government have had, says in a letter to Sashiah Sastri, dated the 6th July 1883 :—

“I hope you will take care of yourself and keep your health and that I shall see you whenever we are within reach of each other. I find a talk with you very bracing.”

The late Dr. Sambhu Chunder Mookerjee, Editor of *Reis and Rayyet*, whose English scholarship and racy style were the envy of even good English writers, writing to Sashiah says (June 12, 1893) :—

“ I pray to God to spare you to the fullest term of human existence as the most accomplished as well as ablest Indian statesman of the day—one who can be pitted against any Anglo-Indian without fear for the result. Before this I had known you only superficially—as a master of a pure, nervous style of English and a successful administrator. Now I recognise you as a man of uncommon force of character as well as of native amiability and infinite humour and great versatility and fertility of resources—just the kind of combination that catches my fancy most. I hear you have the reputation of being the best conversationist in the South. We badly want such men among us in order to interest Europeans in our weal or woe. They complain that natives have no capacity for conversation. Natives do not eat with Europeans and if they could not talk into the bargain, surely all hope of intercourse is at an end.”

Surely the learned doctor does not exaggerate



the importance of the gift of conversational power. Would that we had a few more men with Sashiah's gift to reconcile Europeans to our society !

The third trip in which he accompanied the Maharajah was in December 1875. His Most Gracious Majesty Edward VII, then Prince of Wales, had kindly accepted the invitation of the Maharajah to visit Travancore, and preparations had been made for a fitting welcome. A large elephant and bison hunt was organised at Peer-made for the delectation of His Royal Highness, who was to have landed at Aleppy. But the prevalence of cholera about the time rendered the visit inadvisable and His Royal Highness had telegraphed in graceful terms his regret at his inability to comply with the invitation, and the Maharajah had only the poor satisfaction of seeing His Royal Highness's ship—the *Serapis*—steaming along the offing of the roads of Tre-vandram.

The Maharajah, however, went to Madras and Calcutta and paid his respects to His Royal Highness and the Dewan had also the honour of paying his humble respects to Royalty, being introduced, in a private visit, by the Duke of Sutherland at Government House, Calcutta.

As a complement to his visit to the sacred



shrine of Benares during his first Northern tour. Sashiah Sastri undertook a pilgrimage to Rameswaram in October 1876. He took advantage of the occasion to go to Tripati and pay his adorations to his family Deity there and thence proceeded to Ramesvaram and performed all the religious ceremonies which are enjoined on orthodox Brahmans. Writing from Rameswaram to the Maharajah, Sashiah says :—

“As I have been leading a pilgrim's life for several days consecutively, bathing in the sea at the several *tirthams* and performing many ceremonies, I feel somewhat fatigued and shaken; the change from the Dewan's life to a pilgrim's being rather too sudden and violent. But I trust and believe it may be all for my good, under God's dispensation and your Highness' blessing.”

In matters social and religious, he has been content to tread on the beaten track of orthodoxy. He has not been opposed, in principle, to any healthy reform, but has been of opinion that all reform, to be effective, must be slow and gradual and all hasty, ill-considered steps, instead of helping on the cause, put back all progress. In one of his letters to his friend Chentsal Rao, C.I.E., he says :—

“Yes. Custom is *our God* in everything and very properly so too. It is safe to walk *on the beaten track* till a better one is established. This is the old man's rule. It is left to younger men to create new and more successful methods—if they can !”



Elsewhere he writes :—

“..... A great many prejudices in many directions have disappeared in the face of the stern realities of life.... We may therefore proceed further and fare no worse. King Canute was no more able to bid the waves of the sea roll back than we at the present time are to arrest the changes which Time produces and which we all accept as inevitable in Kaliyug.”

It was this conservatism that had, in 1873, stood in the way of a voyage to England. In 1873 he was invited by the Madras Government to proceed to England at the public cost to give evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons on Indian finance. In sending the invitation to Sashiah, the Resident, Mr. G. A. Ballard, wrote :—

I received the enclosed by to-day's post. It will speak for itself, and conveys to you what I am sure will be very gratifying intelligence, *viz.*, that the Madras Government would be glad to name you as one well qualified to be sent home at the Government expense to give evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons.

On getting Mr. Hudleston's note covering the enclosure I wrote to the Maharajah for an expression of his sentiments and His Highness cordially concurs in the opinion that your services in Travancore may be temporarily spared for the important duty proposed and expresses very kindly his sincere wishes for your successful mission. His Highness has asked me to communicate with you ; and it now remains for you to decide whether your name shall go up or not.



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

As an old friend of your own and a well-wisher of your countrymen let me add a few words :

Personally, your going on such mission cannot fail to be very honourable to you—whilst in performance I believe you would find it most agreeable and instructive. Publicly, your varied experience in the service of Government, with the finishing touch of experience in a Native State—and I may frankly say—your ability and the character you have achieved qualify you in no ordinary way to give valuable evidence as to the position and wants of Southern India and the views of your thinking countrymen on public topics. I sincerely hope you will decide to accept the offer and with all good wishes for a useful, honourable, and pleasant trip if you do go and a happy return to Travancore afterwards,

I remain,

Yours very sincerely,—

G. A. BALLARD.

Sir William Robinson, Chief Member of Government, had also written to Sashiah :—

“Can you help us? I am anxious to see India respond to the call of England.

It really belongs to you, prominent men, and will be sad if it be not responded to. I sympathise heartily in your social difficulties. Are they impossible obstructions?”

Sashiah wrote back to the Resident :—

“I fully appreciate, though I cannot adequately express, my thankfulness for the very generous, sincere and cordial sentiments which pervade every line of your note and confess to having experienced a hard mental struggle in deciding on the course I should adopt in such a momentous matter. The result of this struggle is conveyed in the enclosed reply to the Chief Secretary's note. . . .”



The reply to the Chief Secretary runs thus :—

“ While thankful for and proud of the honour which the Government propose conferring on me, I very much regret that the state of my health and the necessities of my social position as a Brahman are such as absolutely preclude the possibility of my undertaking a trip to England for the purpose indicated in your letter—a purpose which I certainly esteem as a duty I owe no less to my country than to my Government—and for the performance of which I should willingly travel many thousands of miles if on land, and to a more genial climate.”

It is this fondness for old ways that has been taken by young India for want of sympathy. He has always had a good word to say of the legitimate aspirations of the younger generation but their methods seem to him to now and then partake of blatancy and bluster. Here is, for instance, what he writes of the Congress to an intimate friend :—

“ Are you not a little too hard on the Congress? Of course we old people cannot go so fast; but still even the Congresswallahs are sobering down and the noise they make is such a big chorus that it has some influence upon the *nation of rulers*, if not on the rulers direct. The periodical meeting of so many people from distant provinces for a common purpose is itself a preliminary step in political education and money collected and spent on it is not altogether thrown away. I should think the enlargement of the Legislative Councils and the right of interpellation is not a bad fruit of the Congress movement. Of course there will



be some blundering at first but it will not prevent eventual success."

Sashiah's engagement with the Maharajah was for five years and was coming to a close in May 1877. During these five years he had been pulling on well enough with the ruler. A few points of difference had now and then cropped up and created a slight misunderstanding between the king and the minister. One of these was with regard to the patronage of appointments. Sashiah had taken objection to a few appointments proposed by His Highness and the Maharajah had taken the attitude of his minister with no very good grace. On one occasion the Maharajah wrote thus to the Dewan :—

" Whatever may be the excellence of your motives, this is a spirit of Madhava Rao and when I see such a spirit my feelings will be in the same manner irritated. I would therefore give up making any such proposal in future. I will be quite content with the palace appointments I have in my exclusive control as I was during the time of the late Dewan and shall make no pretension to having anything to do with the public service."

These were but fleeting clouds which passed swiftly away and left a brighter love and understanding between the king and his Dewan.

The year 1877, the last year of the period of engagement, dawned inauspiciously for Sashiah. A great domestic affliction fell on him a few weeks



after the year had opened. Sashiah thus writes of it :—

“Your Highness will be sorry to hear of a very deep domestic affliction which has befallen me. It has pleased God to inflict the life-long curse of widowhood on a young niece of mine, just budding into womanhood, who was the centre of my affections, being an orphan brought up by us from the third day of her existence. I have been weeping all day and shall have to weep all my life for the poor creature to whom God has been so cruel.”

The relation between the ruler and the Dewan was getting a little strained. Sashiah submitted a revised scheme of salaries, which should complete the good work he had inaugurated at the commencement of his *regime*. His Highness thought that the Dewan was for showing a profuse liberality at his expense. He was at no pains to conceal his displeasure.

But Sashiah was one

“Who, if he rise to station of command,
Rises by open means ; and there will stand
On honourable terms or else retire
And in himself possess his own desire.”

His reply is worthy of record :—

“I beg to be pardoned for giving this trouble—but as I have no duplicates with me, I am constrained to beg of your Highness to return the figured statements embracing the revised scheme of salaries, if they are no longer or immediately required in the palace. They will be duly submitted again—with a few notes which are required to do the sub-



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

fect full justice and without which it is not easy to gather my reasons from the statements alone.

Certain passages in your Highness' note of yesterday have wounded me deeply and render it imperative that I should defend myself not only against the charge of reckless extravagance, whimsical and capricious action etc., in connection with this unfortunate subject—but also in respect of my financial management which is now so utterly distrusted by your Highness—on the extraordinary ground of my being a minister at will. Though I perfectly knew that I was removable at your Highness' pleasure and even at my own, I never for one moment allowed this to influence my personal or official conduct—I always acted as if I was Dewan for life—as if I had no business more paramount than the discharge of my duties in a conscientious and faithful manner—as if I had no other person to please than your Highness (after God and my own conscience) and as if the weight of good government was on my own shoulders and on no other. It is this intemperate and imprudent excess of zeal which has been the cause from time to time of the disturbance of harmony between sovereign and minister. At the conclusion of your Highness' letter, allusion is made in a way, certainly not complimentary to me, to a subject which I had no idea of broaching myself just now or at any time. More than thrice in the course of the last three years, have I expressed my readiness to resign my post rather than hold it except on perfectly honorable terms, compatible with the dignity and responsibility of the high trust reposed in me. I was prevented—I mean dissuaded—from doing so only by your Highness' kindness and the advice of the British Resident. Except it please your Highness *to command me to stay longer*, I have no idea of asking to be allowed to hold office one day longer than five years. It is a matter



which entirely concerns your Highness as the ruler of this state ; and I shall certainly not seek in the least degree to fetter your Highness' decision by any solicitations on my part. Begging to be forgiven any inappropriateness or freedom of language, I beg to subscribe myself, &c."

An apparent reconciliation soon followed and the Dewan was not slow to follow up the advantage. Though His Highness had reserved the general revision of salaries for a future period, the Dewan thought that the cases of a few hard-worked and under-paid officers might be rectified and recommended them to His Highness thus :—

"The following requests are submitted for gracious, favourable, impartial and merciful consideration of your Highness by your faithful and devoted servant in the conscientious belief that they are nothing but what is deserved by the servants concerned, that they will redound to the credit of your Highness' just administration, that they will also in a manner tell the world that good service will not go unrewarded, that thereby a great inducement will be given for further and continued zealous and faithful service...."

His Highness sanctioned the increments solicited. Sashiah was immensely gratified. He wrote to His Highness :—

"My heart is overflowing with joy and gratitude and in a few days probably many such hearts will equally rejoice when the news of royal liberality falls upon the ears of the servants like dew-drops on parched-up cultivation."

Sashiah's term was running out by May 1877. The Maharajah, though he was perfectly satisfied



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

with the manner in which Sashiah Sastri had conducted the affairs of the state, was loath to renew an engagement which had, he believed, placed him in a position practically subordinate to that of his minister. His Highness wished to appoint a native of the state and nominated Mr. Nanoo Pillay, the Dewan Peishkar of Trivandrum. The nomination was approved by the Madras Government. At the suggestion of the Resident, His Highness extended the term of office for six months to enable Sashiah to wind up his administration and, as was usually done to retiring Dewans, granted him leave on full pay for three out of the six months. In the correspondence which passed with the Madras Government in connection with Sashiah's retirement, His Highness wrote:—

“I take this opportunity of recording my high appreciation of the several distinguished services rendered by Sashiah Sastri during his five years' successful administration.”

The Resident, Mr. H. E. Sullivan, in communicating to Sashiah the wishes of His Highness, thus concludes:—

“I need hardly say that the favourable opinion formed by the Maharajah of your character and abilities is fully shared by all who know you, especially by those who from their official connection with you are in a position to realise the onerous nature of the duties which you are called upon to discharge.”



Sashiah soon after learning the wishes of the Maharajah wrote to him :—

“Wherever I am and so long as I live I shall cherish towards your Highness the same sentiments of loyalty, gratitude and attachment to the person of your Highness with which I have been actuated throughout my service in this state. In service your Highness made me affluent by the grant of a high salary—out of service, your Highness makes me comfortable with a liberal pension and a generous donation. The bread thus given will not be eaten in ungratefulness or sulky discontent. The brightest chapter of my life is my service under your Highness. The little name and fame I have acquired is in reality but the light reflected on the servant by an illustrious master, to serve whom, even for a brief period, has been my pride and privilege.”

In accepting Sashiah's resignation, the Maharajah wrote to him :—

“....Having already given ample proofs of my sincere kindness, regard and esteem towards you I have now simply to repeat that wherever you may happen to be I shall always have the same lively interest in the well-being of yourself and all dear to you and my deep sense of the several distinguished services you have rendered to the state....”

The First Prince familiarly known as Vizagam Tirunal—the late ruler and distinguished scholar—wrote :—

“I should feel thankful to you if you can without putting yourself to inconvenience or ceremony permit me to step into your official residence at about 5 or 5-15 this evening on my return from drive. I cannot better show at this



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

time my respect and esteem for your public character and services to the state and my regard to you as a private friend.

You will further oblige me by retaining these trifles* as specimens of Travancore work and in remembrance of their donor."

After the visit His Highness wrote :—

"I assure you most solemnly that if I left a pleasing impression on you by visiting, that fact in itself has been more than an ample recompense to me. I assure you, if such assurance is needed, that I will not dream of visiting A or B for whom I have no respect, for the mines of Australia and Potosi put together.

The case of my sending a few trifles is entirely different. You are about to leave the scene of your official labours after having won the esteem and appreciation of all whose esteem and appreciation are worth winning and what can be more natural in one of my position who has watched you with deep interest than to wish that there should be a few things around you from which agreeable associations may ever and anon spring and flow."

His Highness the present Maharajah also paid him a visit and expressed his deep sense of Sashiah's brilliant statesmanship. The letter from the third prince, then a student and now no more, is worthy of reproducing :—

"I am very sorry that such a good Dewan as yourself is going off. I will see no other Dewan that takes so much delight in our studies as you do.....I send herewith a copy of my photo."

* Some exquisite samples of workmanship in ivory.



Even the senior Ranee whose husband had brought himself into trouble by having at one time tried to create some friction between the sovereign and the minister had nothing but regard and kindness for Sashiah Sastri, as the following extract from a letter of Sashiah to Her Highness will show :—

“ I never forgot your Highness’ exceeding kindness towards me during my stay in Travancore as Dewan, now 19 years ago—a kindness which was exceeded only by that which was displayed when I took leave of your Highness asking free pardon for all faults which I might have committed in those troublous times, a pardon which was graciously and sincerely granted—a pardon without which I should have left Travancore with a heavy heart but with which I was able to bid adieu with a light heart and a grateful recollection.”

August of 1877 was the last month of his administration. Early in that month he left for Shencotta, a station in the state nearest to the adjoining British District of Tinnevely, followed by the good wishes and sincere regard and esteem of all. From Shencotta he wrote to the Maharajah :—

“ I beg permission to report to your Gracious Highness my arrival here last evening after a safe and pleasant journey. All along the road, signs of increasing prosperity manifested themselves at every mile and the nucleus of many a new village has been formed in tracts but a short while ago the home of the elephant and other wild beasts. The Cotarums and Chuttrams and Travellers’ Bungalows



which have been built in the last three years since your Highness' tour make travelling on this road easy and comfortable. Carts and passengers travel without fear day and night. Entering Shencotta plain, the smiling fields of paddy and dry grains presented a welcome sight and the people flocked round me, not with any grievances this time, but simply to express gratitude for all the good they have derived in various ways since your Highness' last tour to Courtallam, such as revision of assessment on ainzufti lands, abolition of petty taxes, repairs of tanks, &c. I intend to spend the few remaining days of my administration on Travancore soil and shall accordingly hold my Cutcherry here and only go to Courtallam for report at the Residency."

He reached Trichinopoly by the end of August and settled there for the time being, ere he could select a place for permanent retirement.

Thus closed one of the brightest chapters of his public career. Five years is a very short period—too short for any statesman to leave landmarks that can endure for all time. Still the country had fared happily during his administration; the finances had prospered; the tone of the Service with its attractions had been raised; new roads had been opened and villages had sprung up where before had been the home of wild beasts; petty taxes had been abolished; abuses in the Salt Department had been checked; the Padmatirtham tank had been cleansed, the Kachar channel renewed and a never-failing supply of pure



water supplied to the palace and the town ; the feeding houses had been improved while waste and plunder had been checked ; and during the direst famine of 1877 the refugees from over the Ghauts had been welcomed, well-housed and well-fed ; the cause of charity and religion had been vigorously championed ; and in the several trying situations in which he found himself by virtue of his high office he had so conducted himself that without sacrificing principle he had — conciliated all, and carried out his plans with matured and discerning foresight, so that to this day he is remembered as one of the wisest and most benevolent ministers that that country ever fortunate in her rulers and ministers has had.



CHAPTER VIII.

LEGISLATIVE AND OTHER WORK.

For almost a year—from the close of August 1877 to August 1878—Sashiah lived at Trichy in a bungalow not far from the Kâveri, a lovely retreat embowered among mangoes and cocoanuts. In a letter he wrote to his late master soon after arrival at Trichy, he thus describes his new environments :—

“ I beg permission to trespass on your Highness’ valuable time and to inform your Highness that myself and family reached this place on Saturday last and made it our temporary residence. The small bungalow which had the honor of sheltering your Highness on the last tour is at present my home and I therefore feel as if still under royal roof. At a distance of a few hundred yards the majestic Kâveri is flowing from bank to bank, its sweet waters carrying with them plenty and happiness wherever they reach. Still surrounded by your Highness’ servants, wearing your Highness’ clothes and eating your Highness’ ‘*annum*,’ enjoying health and leisure, I cannot but feel that I owe to your Highness a debt of gratitude which I can never liquidate. The dry Taluqs in the District are badly off for rain. From Madura on one side, from Salem on another, tens of thousands of people have come to drink and live by the waters of the Kâveri and by such charities as they could get from people and from Government. The water famine there is greater than food-famine. All Tinnevely and Madura and even



this District are ringing with the praises of the hospitality of Travancore to the famine-stricken families who sought shelter therein."

Sashiah was trying to get a house or site for a house at Kumbhakonam where he meant to settle permanently, as the town had the advantage of an easy drive to his native village. Meanwhile Trichy was his residence and the quiet life he led here had for him all the charms of a schoolboy's holiday. Writing to His Highness Mulam Tirunal, the present Maharajah of Travancore, then second prince, he says :—

"I have settled here for the present and live in a garden-house not quite 200 yards from the Kâveri, whither all my family (and myself occasionally) go to bathe every day—a luxury they have not enjoyed for many a year. This is a hot and dry place and the climate therefore suits me admirably. The Cantonment of Trichinopoly is the largest in Southern India and has very fine drives and one may go and return 10 miles or more morning and evening. I have just bought a horse which promises to turn out a good bargain.

.....I have been enjoying my holiday very much in the silent company of my favourite authors and poets and in private correspondence. I have received letters from the highest in authority and from my old friends generally and they have been a source of great pleasure, since all, while regretting my retirement from Travancore State, think none the less of me."

Between study and private correspondence he



found ample employment for his time. He found the rest, the ease and dignity of retirement, welcome after years of hard work.

But if *he* was content with his quiet life, the public were not, as is evident from the following extract from a letter :—

“A rumour appears to have got abroad in Trivandrum that I have already received an appointment under the Madras Government. I simply mention it to deny it. A new office to be designated “Chairman of the Devasthanam Committee” or some such name is *proposed* to be created under an Act which *has yet to be passed* and some of my friends *wish* that I should fall into it and that is all! I hope nothing will occur to mar the enjoyment of that rest which I humbly think I have earned after 30 years’ toil.”

But work was soon found for him where he was. About the middle of September 1877 he was made the Vice-President and Secretary to the Mansion House Famine Relief Committee at Trichy. This honorary work kept his hands full. Writing on the 24th November 1877, he says to the Maharajah of Travancore :—

“My leisure time here for the last six weeks has been fully absorbed in a labour of love—conducting the distribution of the English Famine Charity in this District to the amount of $1\frac{1}{2}$ lacs of rupees. So, even in retirement, God gives me the luxury of doing good among those around me.”

The *raison d'être* of these local Famine Relief Committees and the work they accomplished



cannot be better described than in the words*
of Sashiah :—

“ So far as could be judged, without historic data, and at this distance of time, no former famine appears to have been so wide-spread and to have threatened the simultaneous annihilation of such a large portion of the population, as the present one, out of which, let us trust, we are just emerging, under the mercy of God. About the end of August 1877 came symptoms of approaching monsoon and cast a ray of hope on the gloomy picture. But what were the helpless people to do even if rain came was the question which vexed the anxious thoughts of many, and among them His Grace the Governor. At the meeting of August 1877, His Grace very truly said, “ When they return to their houses from the Relief Camps or Public Works, they will have to go to a roofless house, with not a single culinary vessel remaining in it. To provide clothing, even such scanty clothing as this climate necessitates—to enable them to repair their huts—to purchase new implements to replace those sold for bread—here were needs sufficient to justify a call on public charity.” It was consequently resolved to appeal to the charity of England and her Colonies, and of India also. The appeal was made in no faltering voice, or by a voice unfamiliar to the English nation. It was at once responded to, and in a manner without parallel even in a country proverbial for the munificence of its charities. The results have been just placed before us by the Honorary Secretary. The charity flowed in a continued stream till arrested, when a sum of 82 lacs of rupees had been reached. The administration of these Charity Funds was wisely entrusted to a Central

* From a speech by A. Sashiah Sastri at a public meeting held at the Banquetting Hall, Government House, Madras.



Committee composed of a mixed agency of officials and non-officials, Merchants and Missionaries, and Christians, Hindus and Mussalmans, and presided over by the Honourable Sir William Robinson, a gentleman who has spent a life-time among us, and to whom no corner of our Presidency is unknown, and who is familiar with the condition and wants of every district, and of the people of every portion of it. The Central Committee in its turn organized Local Committees of elements similarly composed for each Famine District, and they, in their turn, formed Sub-Local Committees equally, and even more representative in character. Individual Agencies, consisting of ladies and gentlemen, who volunteered their services, were also largely employed, and by October 1877 all these various Agencies, to the number of upwards of 120, were at full work and full of enthusiasm and zeal....."

Sashiah Sastri did very good work as Vice-President of the Famine Relief Committee at Trichy. He brought the sufferings of the Gosha women of Trichy to the notice of the Central Committee; he wrote of them :—

"Some of the dwellings are respectable but the generally are wretched hovels which, with the household utensils, are not worth more than a few rupees. In them dwell Gosha ladies with their numerous families, eking out a miserable subsistence out of their own earnings from lace-work and making gold thread, and making up flower garlands and green bangles and out of any earnings of their husbands descended of once well-to-do families but now sunk to the position of jutka-drivers, menial servants, punkah-pullers, or in receipt of a scanty and uncertain income from nominal religious services at mouldering tombs.



and half-ruined *dargahs*. The tale of famine, as we read it in the condition of these Gosha women and of their wretched huts, was in many cases most heart-rending. Some families represented the nobility of the days of Chanda Saheb—Dewans, Commandants, Killedars, royal physicians and palace high priests.”

Money was sanctioned for their relief and Sashiah Sastri, with another gentleman of the Local Committee, disbursed about Rs. 5,000 for the support of life for about 700 families of Gosha women containing more than 2100 souls, and for the repair of the huts destroyed by the rains.

Advances were also made to ryots for the purchase of seeds and for the hire of ploughing cattle and they were thus enabled to set about repairing their huts, ploughing their waste fields, sowing seeds and preparing seed-beds; but many of the poor labourers, especially the women, could not take part in this work for want of dress. The torn rags that covered—or hardly covered—their nether limbs did not meet even the minimum requirements of decency. Sashiah Sastri, perceiving this deplorable condition of the poor workmen and women, immediately telegraphed to Bombay, Madras and Negapatam and obtained 500 pieces of cloth (each 40 yards $\times$ $1\frac{3}{8}$ yards) and caused them to be distributed



by trustworthy agents among the poor of the District. He was also instrumental in extending the same form of charity to the poor workers in the Patukota Taluk of the Tanjore District.

The poor weavers of Trichinopoly District who were, and generally are, the last persons to recover from the effects of a famine found a powerful and sympathetic advocate of their claims for charity in Sashiah Sastri, who wrote of them to the Central Committee:—

“There are yet three months more before the harvest will be in, when it is *hoped* prices will fall and place food more within the reach of the poor than it now is. The *reaping* of the harvest will no doubt give employment to a large number of the poor of the strictly agricultural population, who are from childhood accustomed to reap, bind (sheaves), thresh and stack; and the entrance of the harvested grain *itself* into the market might *reduce* the prices, to what extent (if any at all) cannot now be safely calculated on. But what are the weavers to do meanwhile? And what help will the coming harvest bring to them? They cannot get work from it, and few landlords would engage *their* services for work which they do not know. Even if *agricultural* prosperity returned so soon, the looms are not likely to find immediate employment, while the weavers are still beggars, without capital and utterly prostrated.

It occurred to us that to a class so situated nothing could bring *substantial* relief which did not enable them to start their looms once more and *to live*, till the produce of the looms could be brought to market and made to yield a *subsistence*, to say nothing of a profit. It is impossible to hope



that the richer class of weavers would come to their relief, they themselves having suffered in their degree from the famine and been able, perhaps, just to keep their heads above water, nor is it at all likely that capitalists, who deal in cloth, would venture to make *advances* to *undoubted paupers* who have not even their *looms* in many cases to weave with.

The only chance then for the poor weavers is, if they could get sums of *money* from the Relief Fund to live with, and small quantities of cotton twist, purchased and supplied from the same source, to set their looms going. Their after-chances we need not concern ourselves much about. We shall have done much if we succeed in bringing them back to their looms and setting the looms going."

This appeal also was cheerfully responded to by the Central Committee and by this opportune help the weavers were enabled to start their industry.

About this time Sashiah had occasion to go to Tanjore. There he observed the sufferings of the people and represented to the Collector of the District the hardships of the poor of the town. The Collector, however, thought differently. He said to Sashiah, "There is no famine in Tanjore. For God's sake, don't introduce it into my District."

This ~~easy~~ ^{easy} optimism of the Collector did not convince or comfort Sashiah. He wrote to the Hon. Sir William Robinson, President of the Central Committee, and to Mr. Digby, the Honorary



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

Secretary. The letter to the Secretary deserves to be quoted in full:—

I take the liberty of writing a few lines, touching the condition of the poor people residing in the Fort and suburbs of Tanjore, to which place I paid a visit the other day, and request the favour of your laying the same before the President and members of the Committee at your earliest convenience for their consideration.

2. I am a native of ~~the~~ Tanjore District—served there upwards of three years, now ten years ago, residing in the Town of Tanjore, and, during the greater portion of that time held the Honorary Office of Vice-President of the Municipality, the duties of which brought me face to face with every class of the residents and took me to every nook and corner of the Town. I have thus had ample opportunities of observing and knowing the condition of the people dwelling therein, and may therefore be trusted in the statements which I am about to make.

3. Moreover, during my recent brief visit, I met many of my old friends, both in and out of the service, and derived much information from them as to the present distress among the poor of the Town.

4. The Mahrattas of Tanjore, both Sudras and Brahmins, form a singularly isolated community, whom the adventures of war, two centuries back, threw suddenly into the possession of one of the richest and finest kingdoms in the Carnatic, and time and distance have almost completely cut off their connections with their mother-country—Maharashtra.

5. Once in possession of the principality which fell to them for the taking almost, they seldom had further occasion for the exercise of military virtues and, as a people, they



soon relapsed into an easy and luxurious life, and everything which could contribute to finery and luxury was cultivated to a perfection which to this day has not been attained in the Court of any other Native Prince in India.

6. Leaving out the members of the Royal Family, the families more distantly related to it, the dignitaries of the Palace, all of whom contented themselves with basking in the sunshine of royal favour and grace, and deriving the means of living in splendour direct from the Sovereign's bounty—leaving out the numerous class of officials, high and low, who, in the plenitude of unbridled power, derived a boundless income, the mass of the Mahrattas derived an easy comfortable subsistence, some by taking to service, almost nominal in many cases, on the numerous establishments of the superior class above alluded to, as bearers of swords, maces, lances, flags and various other emblems of power—as sepoys, as peons, as mahouts, as drivers, as household stewards, &c. Others by taking to professions not requiring severe manual labour, such as making flower-garlands, lace-work, embroidery, and tapestry and similar refined occupations too numerous to mention.

7. On the cession of the principality to the British about 80 years ago, the wealth and affluence of many, chiefly of the official class, disappeared. But as most of the members and dependents of the royal family and the grantees and dignitaries of State always lived within the Town, their condition was not very seriously affected, so long as the Raj was maintained and supported by the Punjam Hissa allowance.

8. When the Raj, however, became extinct, scarcely a quarter of a century ago, the fall became to them a reality, and in spite of arrangements considerably made by the



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

British with a view to break the fall, ruin and wretchedness have been overtaking them year after year, for the impoverishment of each nobleman's family involved in the ruin perhaps a dozen poor families, their servants and dependents. The Pensioned class have been, for years, bearing up against the severe pressure of high prices. Those engaged in occupations I have already described have been sinking deeper and deeper in poverty, both by the falling off of their trades and by the high price of food grains. Though a few families have emigrated, still the mass cling to their homes, trying to make a subsistence out of almost nothing.

9. Simple, artless, ignorant and credulous in the extreme, knowing and caring to know nothing of the world outside, unaccustomed to severe work and addicted to an idle and luxurious life, and proud of historical associations yet too fresh to be forgotten they have been, with very few exceptions, in very wretched condition of late years. As one of them very pithily said to me, "We cannot work—we will not steal—we must not beg—we are left to starve."

10. In several families, of even the poorest, the females are quasi-Gosha and are utterly unproductive members. I mean unproductive in an *economic* sense—for otherwise, poverty and progeny seem to go only too much hand in hand !

11. Now, I think, it will be easier to conceive the effects of a terrible famine on a population so situated—a famine which has taken away all the surplus produce of the District and sent up the cost of the food grains to at least three times the normal prices. I have been informed that the present condition, (as indeed their past ever since the famine began) of at least a thousand families is deplorable in the extreme, and I, who know the people so well, can well realize it.



12. It is nothing against the argument of my cause, if the District of Tanjore yielded a fair crop last year or if a bumper crop is maturing on the ground in the present. Naboth's vineyard is indeed laden with fruit—but what of it to the poor neighbours, who cannot get or buy a share of it. This is exactly the position of the bulk of the poor of Tanjore Fort and suburbs, and it is on their behalf I venture to appeal to the General Relief Committee at Madras, who are so nobly administering the noble charity of the English nation. I feel confident that no portion of the Mansion House fund could be better spent than on the mansions of fallen greatness in Tanjore or in the tottering hovels where poverty reigns supreme. I feel sure that a grant of Rs. 75,000 will go a great way to bring relief home to them and send into many a poor man's hut a ray of cheerfulness in a night of darkness. I also think I could organize a thoroughly respectable and trustworthy agency to carry out the distribution of relief, should my proposal meet with sanction.

Sashiah Sastri's representation succeeded. A large sum, nearly a lac of rupees, was sanctioned for the relief of the poor people of the town and for the distressed population of Patukota, a rain-fed taluq of the District. A Local Committee was organised with the sympathetic Dr. Burnell, District Judge, at the head. Sashiah went to Tanjore for a day or two, set the scheme in motion and returned to his work at Trichy.

Hundreds of enthusiastic gentlemen cheerfully courted and accepted this good Samaritan's work; but to Sashiah Sastri's vigorous



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

representations was due that charity was meted out not only to those that sought it but in many cases it was carried to the very doors (it would be scarcely an exaggeration to say the very mouths) of several thousands who, fallen from a position once proud, would rather have starved and died without a murmur than stretch out their arms for charity.

The following extract from his speech in the Banquetting Hall shows the work done by him :—

“The transactions of the General Committee teem in every page with testimony, from every direction, of the immense good and the variety of good which has been accomplished with the help of their money Relief was peculiarly seasonable, and valuable to another section of respectable people, the Gosha women, Mussulman, Mahratta and Rajpoot. This portion of the duty fell exclusively to my lot and that of my friend, Periasami Mudaliyar, head of the Native Community of Trichinopoly, who is now here by my side. Living in secluded nooks and corners of a large Town, and remote from observation and sympathy, these were slowly passing away, dragging a miserable existence, and many among them would surely have fallen victims to starvation but for the aid from English charity which was put into their hands with our own at their own doors. I have but one picture more to present from my part of the country, and that is where Relief funds were applied to the relief of a lady of the highest position who, at the age of 88, found this grim famine at her door, with sons and with daughters yet unmarried,—grandsons and a staff of old faithful servants who, unwilling to abandon their mistress in adversity, still



clung to her. She was in the utmost distress, and the sum of Rs. 350 being put into her hands by the Deputy Collector on behalf of the Committee she spoke in these words: "Please convey my deep sense of their (the English) benevolence and tell them that I was born the offspring of the ruling nation to be entitled at their hands to this liberal charity:" which is an Oriental expression to convey deepest gratitude. What I have been narrating is but a scanty specimen of the good work which has been accomplished, all as labor of love by an agency, the like of which never worked before in this land. The total good work done has been simply colossal, and the results have been of the happiest kind. The English charity, I again repeat, was peculiarly valuable, peculiarly seasonable, and peculiarly fruitful and happy in its results. European and Native gentlemen of the highest position in the service and out of the service, Merchants and Sahookars, Bishops and Missionaries of all denominations and Planters and their Agents all over the Hill-ranges, and, in many instances, ladies of the highest station in life who adopted as their own, the orphans, the waifs and strays of the famine, and saw them reared with maternal care and affection, all these vied with one another in the zealous and faithful performance of the task they had so cheerfully imposed on themselves, the task of carrying to the doors of the famine-stricken the noble charity of which the English nation had made them almoners. I have no hesitation in repeating that the opportune and critical moment at which the help arrived—for according to a proverb among us, 'Flood and famine are most treacherous when subsiding'—and the kind manner in which the gift was taken to the afflicted generally, and to certain classes of people in particular, on account of their strong prejudices, to whom Public Works



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

and Feeding-Camps were the one a degradation, the other a pollution, gave a hundred-fold value to the gift. On behalf of my countrymen generally, and on behalf of the distressed famine-stricken of the South India especially, to whom English charity came like sweet water to men dying of thirst, whose drooping spirits, nay, ebbing life, were resuscitated by the timely and kindly help, and enabled them to preserve themselves and their children, to rebuild their huts, to sow their fields, and reap a harvest, when they had despaired of living to see another—on behalf of millions of such of my countrymen, and for the good they have experienced, I now express their first prayerful thanks to the all-merciful Providence who is with us in the hour of grief, and the hour of joy, and whom it has pleased to order a hopeful change in the season. And their next thankfulness and gratitude to the Empress of India, who headed the charitable movement at home, to the English nation and to the colonies who gave so cheerfully, so quickly and so freely; to the Viceroy who headed the contributions in India; and to the Maharajahs of Baroda, Indore, and Travancore, and other Princes, nobles and personages, and people of India, who added their quota of help with equal sympathy and readiness.”

This ‘labour of love’ came to a close by the commencement of January 1878 and Sashiah Sastri was sent as a delegate to the public meeting held at Madras on the 28th January 1878 for expressing the heart-felt gratitude of the people for the sympathy and support so nobly and generously accorded them by the people of Great Britain, her colonies and India, in relief of



the distress caused by the famine; and Sashiah Sastri was called upon to move the first and most important resolution, which he did in a splendid speech from which extracts have already been given.

In November 1877 the Governor of Madras, His Grace the Duke of Buckingham, paid a visit to Trichy. The address of the citizens to the Duke was drawn up by Sashiah Sastri who suggested therein certain projects which were likely to bring fertility and wealth to the less-favoured tracts of the District. The following extract from the address refers to them :—

“ It was here in Trichinopoly that the earliest triumph of hydraulic science was achieved by Captain (now General Sir Arthur) Cotton (all honor to his name). Taking the idea probably from the Grand Anicut, a most remarkable work of remote times and a monument of untutored native engineering skill, Captain Cotton conceived and carried out the bold idea of controlling the Coleroon by means of a gigantic masonry dam so as to arrest the drying up of the Kâveri which became imminent year after year. The successful result of the Upper and the Lower Anicuts of the Coleroon emboldened that great Engineer to bridle the Godaveri—a river 5 miles broad at the point chosen—in a similar way and with still more magnificent results. Thenceforward, this plan of Deltaic irrigation has been applied to the rivers Krishna and Pennar and to the rivers of other Presidencies; the Mahanaddi in Orissa, the Ganges Canal in the Doab, the Soane in Bengal; all which works have

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

converted the tracts affected into scenes of matchless fertility and wealth, and have for ever protected them and the neighbouring provinces from the disaster of recurring droughts.

“The Coleroon Anicut having been designed mainly to secure the plentiful irrigation of Tanjore, the share of Trichinopoly in the benefit is comparatively small. But it is believed, not without good grounds for the belief, that there is ample room for other irrigation works which will benefit a still larger area in this district.

“An Anicut (weir) across the Kāveri below its confluence with the Amravaty, with high level channels and a series of reservoirs for the benefit of the Kulitalai Taluq on the south and Musiri Taluq on the north; a series of reservoirs in the valley of the Aiyar (through which a vast volume of water now escapes unutilized) in the north, and Uyacondan in the south; a large reservoir at the meeting of the Patchamalai and Kollimalai ranges; the projected Vengur Channel for part cost of which, the ryots have years ago subscribed and paid money; and the utilization of the waters of the Manjankoppu and Koriar hill-streams, are all projects which in the humble estimation of the ryots will bring fertility and wealth to tracts now too frequently exposed to droughts, and which suffered but too severely during the present Famine.”

The Duke had a great regard for Sashiah Sastri, who had a private interview with the Governor during this visit, writing of which to the Maharajah of Travancore he said:—

“I saw the Duke several times, on arrival,—at Levee—at a deputation of the native community—and had also a private interview at which he received me very kindly. At



the Levee he had a good word to say to each and to me he said, 'You have done excellent service in Travancore.'

In recognition of his long and distinguished services Sashiah Sastri was made a Companion of the Star of India and on the 1st January 1878 the royal grant of the dignity of C.S.I. and the decoration appertaining thereto were conferred upon him at Madras. His Excellency the Governor, the Duke of Buckingham, in presenting the insignia of the order alluded in graceful terms to the valuable services rendered by Sashiah Sastri as an official of the Government and to the enlightened assistance offered by him in the administration of the affairs of Travancore.

The ceremony of investiture was an imposing one and as Sashiah Sastri writes of it :—

"The gathering of our old friends and school-fellows was a singularly large and happy one—such as we never saw before or are likely to see again. It was very gratifying to me to be invested in their presence."

About the same time the Duke of Buckingham appointed Sashiah Sastri as an additional member of the Legislative Council. Writing to His Highness the present Maharajah of Travancore in acknowledgment of his congratulations, Sashiah Sastri says :—

"I thank your Highness for congratulations on my appointment to the Legislative Council. I have not the



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

slightest intention of settling down in Madras—for the climate of the coast is prejudicial to me. I like the pure, dry heat of the interior, such as at Trichy, Madura and West Tanjore. I shall run up to Madras whenever the Legislative Council sits and retreat to my own home in the interior. My 'finances' are not strong and I cannot think of keeping two establishments—one at Madras, one at Trichy or Tanjore. Though there is a kind of glitter and some real interest about the work in the Legislative Council, still I must confess there is not real independence or power given to the non-official members. My beginning in the Legislative Council has been unfortunately associated with two measures of obnoxious and unpopular taxation—one a tax on all trading and artizans' class—the other (which will become law next Monday) a tax on the Municipalities for Police purposes."

The rumoured appointment of the Devasthanam Commissionership was about this time in contemplation. It was proposed to attach a salary of Rs. 1,500 or so to the appointment. The Hon'ble Sir William Robinson was anxious that Sashiah Sastri should accept the appointment. But the scheme was postponed and finally given up. Writing of this to the present Maharajah of Travancore he said :—

"About the 'Devasthanam Commissionership' your Highness alludes to, it is an appointment to be created hereafter—(perhaps not within two years). It will carry with it a salary of some Rs. 1,500 or so and I may have the refusal of it, if I am inclined to get into harness again. But the probabilities are my love of 'freedom' will overcome



the temptation of money, notwithstanding the fact that I am not rich. After being Dewan of Travancore (notwithstanding it was no bed of roses!) I don't wish to be anything else or anything less. Moreover I feel I am on the 'down-hill' side of life and I am quite content with the career I have run under God's blessing and with the little competence He has measured out to me for my support in the evening of life."

About November 1879 Sashiah Sastri was deputed as the Madras Member of the Viceroy's Legislative Council at Calcutta. The present Maharajah of Travancore, congratulating him on this new honour, wrote :—

"Permit me to offer you my most sincere and heart-felt congratulations on your appointment as a Member of the Viceregal Legislative Council. It was with no small amount of gratification and pleasure I saw this announcement in the *Madras Mail* quoted from the *Gazette*. It always affords me the greatest pleasure to hear of your welfare and no one feels more sincerely rejoiced than myself at the honour conferred on you by the Government of India. The whole of the Madras Presidency will, I am sure, share that feeling with me."

The Duke of Buckingham refers to this in the following terms in one of his public speeches :—

"In nominating the Hon'ble Sashiah Sastri to the Council of the Viceroy, in placing the Hon'ble Justice Muthuswami Aiyar on the Bench of our own High Court, I know that I have advanced them to no honour which was not well deserved or to a post which would not be well filled. Such



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

are the men of whom one shall hereafter need more—keep them in your minds as studies for your emulation.”

On the expiry of his term in the Madras Legislative Council he was appointed for a second term. And Lord Ripon also offered him a seat in the Viceregal Council a second time in November 1884 ; but Sashiah Sastri had to wire back :—

“Feel much honoured ; but regret my health is too indifferent to allow me to accept the offer with any chance of doing justice to His Excellency’s nomination. Moreover I have still important reforms to carry out here—(Pudukotah) urgently.”

It might be incidentally mentioned here that Sashiah Sastri had unbounded admiration for the exalted virtues of Lord Ripon, who, in turn, had a high regard for Sashiah Sastri’s personal worth and honour. When Lord Ripon was about to bid farewell to these shores, Sashiah Sastri expressed his sentiments in the following telegram :—

“Though only a unit among millions, still I wish to join in the melancholy pleasure of saying Farewell to your Excellency. This much is certain. No Viceroy has rendered justice to the true principles of British Administration as your Excellency has done within the brief space allotted to Viceroyalty. And no Viceroy will carry to his Queen the affectionate homage of so many millions won no less by your Excellency’s truly exalted personal character than by public virtues and standard of statesmanship such as no Pro-Consul ever brought out to India, and fearlessly exercised for



India's benefit. May God grant you a long and blessed life, and for our sake, with opportunities for further good."

His Excellency replied through his Private Secretary: "Viceroy desires me to thank you for your friendly message which has gratified him much."

Besides his regular work in the Legislative Council, Sashiah Sastri was consulted by the Government and the Revenue Board on many important questions of state—political, legislative and financial; and his views, the outcome of a long and varied experience were ever marked by sobriety and clear insight. It may not be out of place here to take a brief survey of his views on some of the important questions on which he was consulted. Among those subjects may be mentioned the following:—

(1) His minute on Local Self-Government was considered by competent judges to be a valuable state paper. Sir Madhava Rao wrote:—

"I have just gone through your paper on Local Self-Government and the sensation which fills my mind is that of pleasure and pride.

Yours is a broad survey of the situation and prospect marked by judgment, tact, discrimination and impartiality. The whole is also very felicitously expressed."

Sir T. Muthuswami Aiyar wrote:—

"Your minute on Local Self-Government is an excellent state paper. As to diction it is really eloquent."



D. F. Carmichael, member of Council, said :—
“ Your minute is most sensible and most eloquent too.”

The following extracts from the minute show his views :—

Practically, the self-governing bodies will move very much in grooves cut and made for them ; and will have very little room to go wrong and very little power to take ‘ new departures.’ That this must be so for some good long time yet, will be obvious to those who have studied the condition of the people. Notwithstanding the great strides made within the last 30 or 40 years, education and knowledge have touched but the outermost thin fringe of a very vast population, and those who have been so influenced are for the most part absorbed in the various subordinate services of the governing machinery and the rest, few and far between, are also intensely engaged in professions which take up their time and attention. An educated independent middle class of landed gentry is still to come into existence. Even at this early stage ‘ stump oratory ’ has sprung up and it goes without saying that a class of penniless patriots or demagogues who have nothing at stake is a dangerous element in any country, and must be so in a country acquired by conquest and held by the sword.

In Great Britain centuries of anarchy brought the Wittenagemot into existence and from the Wittenagemot to the present Parliament was the development of a 1,000 years, full of stirring vicissitudes. If this was the case with a compact nation like the Anglo-Saxons, how much more slow and difficult must be the process of amalgamation and the development of representative institutions based on popular election in a country like India, peopled by divers nationalities, and where each nationality in its turn is divided within itself



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into sections which are as different in thought and feeling as one nation is from another? It will probably be a century before representative institutions are fully matured and attain to that stage when absolute powers of governing in all local matters can be safely entrusted to them.

Meanwhile there is no cause to prevent a forward movement. The spread of education is slowly revolutionizing national ideas and raising national aspirations, and, unless the Government takes note and keeps pace, discontent, if not disaffection, must spring in the minds of the leading classes and ere long danger to the State must ensue. It is therefore a graceful and statesmanlike move on the part of Government to invite the people to take a share in the discussion and management of matters in which they must be interested.

The people on their part must thankfully accept the invitation and show themselves worthy of confidence and capable of discussing public matters in a public spirit—free of all prejudices and personal likes and dislikes.

The simple act of bringing together on the same platform the subjects through their representatives and the rulers in the person of the District Officers of Government, was a very great step in advance when it was taken 15 years ago by the establishment of Municipalities and Local Fund Boards. The Landholders and others who had never before met the Collector on terms of equality absolutely refused to take their seat at the same table; and yet what a change has taken place within this short space of time? The Collector or other presiding officer is no longer an object of dread and on occasions he is often outvoted.

.....The educated natives, whether engaged in Government service or in other walks of life must, for a long time to come, continue to be the interpreters between their own



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

countrymen and the rulers. To say that they are selfish and unsympathetic and not likely to take interest in, or sacrifice time and convenience for, the common good of the country, is a libel on their character and a libel on education itself.

I therefore entirely agree with the gentlemen of the Committee in all their main proposals, which are well calculated to secure a greater number of admissions to the existing Municipal and Local Fund platforms, but also to create a greater number of such platforms all over the country, where the representatives of the people and Government will meet on terms of equality and discuss with perfect freedom all matters of local (but virtually public) interest.

Twenty years hence the result will be a wide diffusion of the knowledge of the principles on which the country is governed, and a greater familiarity with the ways of conducting public business, and an intimate acquaintance with the agencies who are engaged in the work of administration and the dispelling of that dense ignorance among the people which breeds suspicion and even disloyalty.

As the Local bodies become more and more fit, the powers of control and check over them which are now necessarily reserved in the hands of District Officers will be gradually relaxed and eventually transferred to the bodies themselves. For the sake of the cause, the people, and the rulers, the watchword for a long time to come must still be 'step by step' (which is the same as 'Festina Lente').

In the Madras Presidency we have been proceeding exactly on these lines and the existence and successful working of a great number of Local Fund Boards and Municipalities is an undeniable proof of the practicability



of accomplishing more in the same direction and will render easier the growth and assimilation of similar bodies all over the Presidency.

A great mistake has been made I fear by Editors of Vernacular Newspapers in supposing that the Government of India in suggesting the withdrawal of the District Officer whenever practicable from the 'local bodies' meant to indicate a want of trust in them. Such would be an unwarrantable presumption. The real meaning is obviously that it would be more in consonance with the principles enunciated and a great earnest of the intentions of the Government to have the official element in these local representative bodies reduced to a minimum, so that the people may see that the Government do not wish to govern by a permanent and overwhelming majority, composed of its own officers and always presided over by the Head of the District. Nor can I conceive that any body of highly educated gentlemen such as compose the great Civil Service of India would so far forget their duty and loyalty to Government or the claims of kindred humanity as to offer obstructions to the movement from mere arrogance or selfish motives. It is within my experience that the Collector—President reposed greater confidence in a native Vice-President than in a European (Civilian) Vice-President. Nor is it possible for me to forget the fact that twenty-five years ago there was not a single native exercising Revenue and Magisterial functions higher than those of a Tahsildar or Head of Police. What is the case now? All these functions excepting the highest have been transferred to Native Deputy Collectors and Magistrates. Twenty-five years ago no native was trusted with the charge of a Treasury and now there is none but a native in charge of all Treasuries all over India. Again twenty-five years ago in the Judicial Department even the

Principal Sudder Amins had but a limited jurisdiction. Now there is hardly a District Judge exercising original jurisdiction, the whole work of original jurisdiction has passed to native agency. Last and not the least, the Highest Appellate Courts in the country contain a Native Judge. Again the Civil Service itself is no longer a monopoly. Natives have entered it both by competition and by nomination. Though it may be true that measures tending to make inroads into their privileges and emoluments have been invariably resented by the Civil Service, I am not aware that any opposition was ever continuously manifested to measures transferring the highest powers to competent natives. On the other hand, relief from excessive work was always hailed with joy. There is thus nothing in the history of the past which need cause the slightest apprehension that the Civil Service as a body would in the future oppose measures such as are now under discussion involving the transference of administrative functions from themselves to representative bodies elected by the people, subject to such barely necessary restrictions as are the necessary consequences of their responsibility for the good-working of the whole machinery. I have not, therefore, the slightest hesitation in fully endorsing the views of the Committee on this point.

While recording these views I cannot fail to foresee and must not hesitate to state the many rocks ahead, which the scheme of election now to be introduced so largely will have to steer clear of. If in such an advanced country as England many inducements, some of a very questionable nature, are required to bring electors to the poll, how much more intense would those evils become where the people are quite new to the system and too prone to yield to temptations when a 'vote' can be exchanged for 'coin.'



But I suppose it would be long—very long—before the hustings come to be so contested or the post of a Member on the District Local Fund Board or a Municipal Commissionership becomes an object of a life's ambition like an "M. P." for which even £50,000 is sometimes not too great a price in the native land of our Rulers.

I therefore fully concur in the views of the Committee on the 'Franchise' which will embrace the 'lords of many acres,' the less rich but educated men, traders, as well as servants of Government, retired and in active service.

If, under God's blessing, these institutions prosper, and work well, a rich political future is undoubtedly in store and representative bodies of a more perfect kind near the centres of Local and Imperial authority, and finally at the very Centre of All Authority, namely, the great British Parliament, must be the logical natural outcome of the small beginnings of the present.

His conservative views did not commend themselves to the younger and more forward section of the Hindu community. As the late Kristo Das Pal wrote to Sashiah :—

"I can well believe that your minute on Local Self-Government does not meet with the approval of our young politicians. They are too sanguine and too fervid for calm consideration of public questions. They are too easily carried away by an idea and I am afraid they are doing mischief by allowing their zeal to outrun their discretion. But what cannot be cured must be endured.

All right-minded men will, however, agree with you."

Sashiah Sastri himself knew that his view of the question would not meet with the approval



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

of Progressive India. Writing to a friend he says :—

“I don't expect my radical friends to go with me in all that I say or in anything that I say; but I have expressed my own honest convictions.”

Certain expressions, also, in his minute, such as ‘stump oratory,’ ‘penniless patriots or demagogues who have nothing at stake,’ were ill received by the younger generation. Sashiah Sastri, however, felt, as he wrote to Rao Bahadur Pattabhiraman Pillai, his friend :—

“The use of such phrases as *penniless patriots* mars the dignity of sentiment and I am indeed on reflection sorry for it. I suppose the truth was that I must have been smarting under a sense of wrong done me by some of my junior public friends who had misunderstood and misrepresented me. For all that, it is a slip I admit.”

(2) His paper on ‘Ilbert's Bill’ is a very eloquent and forcible statement of his views—in the words of the late scholarly ruler of Travancore, “with the exception of Sir A. Hobhouse's article in the ‘Court Review,’ *the very best paper* I have read on the subject.” As Sir Madhava Rao wrote :—

“It is a paper marked with your usual literary skill and copiousness. It shows thought and research. It is explicit and unequivocal in its utterances. It shows that you have the courage of your convictions.

As such your paper will secure the admiration of those



(whether Europeans or Natives) who are in favour of the Bill. It is altogether an elaborate and telling state paper.

If you insist on my saying anything less eulogistic of that paper, I can only say that, in parts, it seems to me a little too strongly worded. Those who oppose the Bill might say that you have denied them all sympathy, put them down relentlessly, and made them out to be a set of prejudiced fools! In a word—that you have taken a too much one-sided view of the question.”

We can well understand the reason of his uncompromising attitude with regard to this question. A similar question involving the same principle had, as we have seen, arisen, when he was Dewan of Travancore, between the Travancore Government and the Government of India. Sashiah Sastri had fought a manly battle and lost. But his defeat had not brought conviction. How bitterly he felt the disappointment may be seen from the following extracts from his letters to his master :—

“As regards the so-called concession to this state we cannot value it so highly as the Government of India appears to do..... It is only the shadow of a favour without the substance.....”

Again, “when I spoke yesterday to the Resident on the subject of Jurisdiction, I must confess I was very warm—even violent, I fear, in the bitterness of my disappointment and grief..... For the present, expression of deep regret at the decision of the India Government by which a royal prerogative is taken away without cause, without provocation, without justice, will be sufficient.”

This episode explains why when the subject came up for his opinion in a more extended form, he laid aside his maxim—that experience and political expediency are safer guides in great questions of public policy than any amount of *a priori* reasoning however logical—and expressed himself in no faltering tone.

The following extracts from his minute are worthy of quotation here :—

The vicissitudes of the English power in this country have been many and have from time to time necessitated abnormal arrangements for the administration of Justice, Civil and Criminal, where European British subjects were concerned. These arrangements from their very nature could not last and have not lasted immutably for ever.

In less than two centuries and three quarters, which is but a short space in the history of Empires,—Commercial factories became Presidency-Towns, Presidency-Towns grew into Presidency-kingdoms and Presidency-kingdoms became in their turn component parts of a vast united Empire under one Empress. The Judicial machinery for the trial of European British subjects underwent corresponding changes. By the Charters of 1661 and 1669, the Governors with their Councils of Madras, Bengal and Bombay were constituted Courts of 'Oyer and Terminer' and their jurisdictions were fixed by the Charters of 1726 and 1753. These Governors' Courts gave way to the Supreme Court at Fort William in 1774 and to 'Recorders' Courts in Madras and Bombay in 1797 extending the jurisdiction over all British subjects in all the Provinces. These two last gave place to the Supreme Court in 1801 at Madras and 1823 in Bombay.



As new territories were acquired by the Company, the jurisdiction of these Courts was enlarged. To provide for offences committed by British subjects at a distance, Justices of Peace were appointed at first by the Governor-General and afterwards by the several Governors and Lieutenant Governors from among the covenanted servants of the East India Company or other British inhabitants. The Jurisdiction of the Supreme Courts passed to the present High Courts in 1862, 65 and 66 under statutes of Parliament and natives were declared eligible to the Benches of those Courts. Under these statutory changes, Procedure also has changed from time to time. Thus [in 1812, Zillah Magistrates were empowered to fine up to Rs. 500 and imprison up to 2 months. In 1857, four bills were brought into the Legislative Council with a sweeping clause rendering European British subjects liable to be tried by any magisterial tribunal of the country without distinction. This clause, however, was rejected by a majority in the Council. The mutiny came in 1857 and the subject was dropped. Act XXV of 1861 left the jurisdiction untouched. Mr. Stephens' Bill of 1870-71, which passed as Act X of 1872, extended the jurisdiction of British Magistrates and British Sessions Judges while leaving the disqualification of Natives to try European British subjects untouched. This was followed by an amending Act in 1874. The question again came under discussion once more and the law of Criminal Procedure was finally remodelled as Act X of 1882, still leaving Native disqualification to try European British subjects untouched.

During all these momentous changes, it cannot be denied that some privileges were lost at each step. But the most substantial privileges of the European British subject have remained and still remain unchanged, and constitute a most

invidious distinction between the European British and Native subjects. (a) A right of appeal from the lightest possible sentence of a magistrate to the Sessions Judge or to the High Court and from the latter to the High Court is still reserved. (b) Right of being tried by the High Court for all offences for which one year's imprisonment is not considered adequate is still reserved. (c) Right to be tried by a Jury composed of his own countrymen to the extent of one-half is still reserved. (d) That palladium of the Englishman's liberty—to wit, the Habeas Corpus Act—is still reserved to him.

All the change that is contemplated by the Bill of February 1883 now under consideration is, that, where the posts of District Magistrate or of Sessions Judge are held by covenanted Natives, such natives shall not by the mere reason of their race be debarred from exercising the jurisdiction over European British subjects, which their European brethren of the covenanted service exercise over them by virtue of their office.

It has been argued with some speciousness that throughout all the changes in the matter of jurisdiction, the right of being tried by their own countrymen was left untouched and so long as that was so, they did not care to complain. But is it altogether so? Was not the appointment of Natives as Justices of the Peace in the Presidency-Towns so long ago as 40 years and then again that of Natives to the Bench of the High Courts constituted under Royal Charter, direct invasions of this right? If they were, have they been attended with any disastrous consequences such as are foreboded on the present occasion? What disasters have befallen in the adjoining Colony of Ceylon, where the natives of the island are not debarred from exercising Criminal Jurisdiction over European British subjects?



Special privileges originating under special circumstances and calculated to meet a given state of things must give way to the ordinary privileges of a citizen when the special circumstances which justified them have passed away. Common Laws, common Courts, common Jurisdiction, common Procedure, common Liberties and common Rights are but the legitimate outcome of common allegiance to one Sovereign. The proposal involved in the present Bill is but one more step towards the consolidation of the Empire, and that consolidation will not be complete, till the perfect equality of all in the eye of the law is asserted and enforced, or in other words, till article 8, chapter I, of the proposed Bill of 1857 finds its appropriate place in the Procedure law of the land. That article was "no person whatever shall, by reason of place of birth or by reason of descent, be in any criminal proceeding whatever, exempted from the jurisdiction of any of the criminal Courts." And Mr. Peacock (afterwards Sir Barnes Peacock) thus spoke on the subject: "This article would invest the Courts of the country with jurisdiction over European British subjects. To him it appeared to be correct in principle, for he could not understand upon what ground it could be contended that any one class of persons should be exempt from the jurisdiction of those Courts. No Frenchman or German or Armenian or East Indian was exempt from their jurisdiction. European British subjects alone enjoyed that privilege; and the Council was aware that there were many cases in which, on account of the extreme inconvenience, expense and delay which must necessarily be caused by committing defendants for trial to the Supreme Courts for offences committed in distant parts of the country, offenders were frequently allowed to go unpunished. The inconvenience was not confined to prosecutors. It



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

extended also to the witnesses, who were frequently in no way interested in the proceedings. The article to which he referred would bring an offender, whatever his place of birth or whatever his descent, under the jurisdiction of the Court within the local limits of which his offence might be committed." This *summum bonum* of impartial legislation may not be attainable quite yet ; but it must be attained one day and that cannot be very far ; and when that time arrives, I would not deprive the European British subject of his special privileges, but would legislate that his privileges in the matter of appeals and in the matter of the Habeas Corpus Act be extended to all Her Majesty's subjects ; for liberty of person is as dear to the Native as it is to the Englishman and there is no reason whatever why it should be held more sacred or be more jealously guarded in the one case than in the other.

The knell of all exclusive race-privileges has been unmistakably sounded from time to time. It was sounded in 1833 when the British Nation, in Parliament assembled, most solemnly declared that every subject of Her Majesty may rise to the highest offices in the State without distinction of colour, caste or creed. It was tolled again (about 1834) when all European British subjects were declared liable to the ordinary *Civil* jurisdiction of the Company's Courts of every grade. It was again sounded when natives were appointed Justices of the Peace in all the Presidency-Towns, and later on when the Benches of the highest Courts in the land were thrown open to the natives, and again unmistakably when the Civil Service was practically thrown open, both by competition and by nomination, to the natives of the country. The Policy of the British Parliament has ever been onward, founded as it has ever been on that keen sense of equal laws, equal justice and equal rights which is the real corner-



stone of the British Constitution—a constitution which stands so pre-eminently high in the estimation of the world. The voice of that august body never faltered when questions of such momentous interest came before it. Not all the *fulmen brutum* has made that body swerve to the right or to the left and the whole of the civilized world has not failed to read written over the portals of that assembly, *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum*.

In matters criminal, the present position of the Englishman in the mofussil, if truth must be told, is almost one of immunity from prosecution, for, the prosecution of a European British subject is at present very heavily handicapped by the immense sacrifice of time and convenience to the prosecuting natives as well as to the witnesses. It is a notorious fact that in the remote and unpeopled parts of the country whither British enterprise and capital take them, they, not unoften, take the law into their own hands and frustrate all attempts to bring them to punishment. While the Englishman has no objection to take the law of a native in criminal matters at the hands of a native magistrate, why should he shrink from the manly test of submitting to it himself when it comes to the native's turn to take the law of him? In Civil matters, the law makes no distinction between the European British subject and the native and both have been freely taking the law of each other before the lowest as well as the highest Courts without any disaster befalling either. Why then should there be in criminal matters any distinction? The substantive criminal law being the same for both, why should there be any distinction of race in the *dispensers* of justice to one of them?

I have carefully studied the petition of protest and have searched in vain for a solid argument against the proposed alteration of jurisdiction. In place of argument, I find

that, that worst of prejudices—namely, race-prejudice—is substituted. The logic of prejudice will listen to no reason and it was most painful to me to observe that the civilizing influences of a century have done so little to bring nearer together in sympathy the two races, (originally of the same stock) whom Providence has placed side by side on the same soil as common subjects of one and the same Sovereign. Is not even this feeble ground of race-feeling cut away from under their feet when it is remembered that the definition of a British subject is a very comprehensive one and which virtually excludes none born in Her Majesty's Colonies, a Hottentot,—a Negro,—a Singalese,—a Maori,—a Canadian; anybody in Her Majesty's Colonies might attain the status of a British subject and be legally qualified to try a European British subject in India. Is a Hindu gentleman—nay, an Aryan brother—less worthy than any of the above?

Again, has not the character of the *personnel* of the Civil Service itself changed very much since the competition system? That Service is no longer the close preserve of gentlemen, members of certain families almost hereditarily succeeding one another. It is now open to the son of the common hangman as it is to the scion of a noble family, and in the ordinary course of things, the former might possibly preside at the latter's trial. Why should it then hurt the feelings of an Englishman to be tried by a scion of the Zamorin or the Maharajah of Benares? It would indeed be a very strange commentary on the advance of civilization in India and of English education in particular, if it be declared that the best of natives—the very cream of the intellectual aristocracy of India—who had received the best education available in the country and had gone to finish it in the English Universities,—who had successfully competed with the children of England on her own soil and in her own schools,—and



competed again at the Examinations for the Service, obtained their covenants and come back to their country, saturated with English feelings and English thoughts and English loyalty—and, after returning, have served from the bottom-rung of the ladder and risen after 18 or 20 years of spotless service to the bench of a Magistrate or Sessions Judge,—if men such as these are declared unfit to have the very limited criminal jurisdiction over European British subjects which their brethren of the service—it may be, of inferior natural attainments or aptitude—are considered by virtue of their birth eligible to exercise. If it be said that the European Civil Servant qualifies himself by learning the languages, customs and manners of the natives to try the natives, why cannot the Native Civilian, who has mastered the language, customs and manners of the Europeans to a much greater degree be assumed to be equally fit to try Europeans,—safeguarded as the latter will still be by so many privileges already alluded to?

If all the arguments of the protest amount to no more than a prejudice arising from race-feeling,—a mere antipathy of colour,—a mere dislike engendered by habit and false notions,—what were the results when such blind prejudices were brought face to face with reason and stern justice? Let History tell. How much money and blood did England spend in the emancipation of the Negroes who were not the less hated on account of their colour? Was not the great American War of the Confederate States against the Federals waged, so regardless of life or money, to declare the coloured man an equal in the eye of the law to the white man? Is not the United States of America, perhaps the greatest and the most powerful empire on Earth, an example where all nationalities are absorbed and moulded into one great nation for purposes of Government and all men, be he



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

Scotch, Irish, Swiss, French, German or Spanish, or Negro or Chinaman, live in peace under equal laws administered without reference to race or colour ?

Far from apprehending any disaster to non-official Englishmen or British enterprise in India from the passing of the Bill, I am in hopes that it will have the effect of placing the administration of justice on a higher pedestal than at present,—that it will be a mark of that confidence in Her Majesty's native subject, which it is impossible to deny to him after the solemn declaration of 1883, and of the Queen's Proclamation of 1858—and that it will be of a piece with that generous policy of the British administration which has been the characteristic of it from the very beginning. I am also in hopes that in a few years when the agitation caused by unthinking men driven into a phrensy for the moment shall have subsided, that the benefits of the proposed measure will be realized and acknowledged by the very class who now so vehemently oppose it,—who, I trust, will find that they are saved a world of trouble, inconvenience and expense, when they find a native Magistrate at their very door as competent to dispose of criminal charges laid against them as one of their own countrymen at a distance,—and in some cases, one much more absolutely unbiassed than one of their countrymen, when as often happens, European society is split up in factions from the influence of which neither the European Magistrate nor the European Sessions Judge could possibly keep aloof. I set much store on this feature of the question and have no hesitation in saying that whatever occasional failure of justice might arise from the ignorance of the native Magistrate of the customs and manners of Englishmen and Englishwomen, such failure will be more than compensated by his perfectly neutral attitude.



For these reasons I am deliberately of opinion that the Bill should pass into law.

(3) As to the desirability of encouraging a diversity of occupations and the development of new branches of industry in India, he was of opinion that a change of occupation is opposed to the instincts and traditions of the people and that India ever has been and must continue to be essentially an agricultural country. He wrote :—

“ A diversity of occupations depends on the wants, fashions, customs and the tastes of the nation. Without, therefore, a very considerable change in any or all these respects, a new occupation cannot spring into existence. Now the Hindus are the most conservative nation in every respect. Their habits, fashions, and tastes are stereotyped, and the occupations which have sprung out of them have also become as stereotyped as the system of castes, which, under authority of sacred writings, has stereotyped the several sub-divisions of occupations into those of the priest, the warrior, the tradesman, and the laborer.

Moreover, the whole nation disintegrated itself in innumerable village communities, each self-governing and self-supplying its own wants: the village grew its own staple-food; the Bunya kept his little shop and vended all other articles of food; the Mahajun (of Upper India) did the banking business; the Sudra or out-caste laborer tilled the lands and raised the crop; the carpenter built the houses and cart and made the implements of agriculture; the blacksmith assisted at the same; the weaver wove the cloths for all ordinary wear; the goldsmith made trinkets for the more well-to-do people as well as for the poorest; the potter supplied all wants of the

village in earthenware ; the chuckler carried on his trade in leather, making sandals and tackle for ploughs, &c. ; the barber plied his vocation and in many places was also the physician, the surgeon, and the midwife of the village ; the *takar* watched the crops and watched the village against robbers ; the priest performed his sacred duties ; and the head of the village managed all common concerns, internal as well as external. These occupations which supplied all the normal wants of the nation have descended from sire to son, from time out of mind, and are at this day exactly as they were, perhaps, 5,000 years ago. The bulk of the people remaining as they were, the occupations remain unchanged.

The only changes which did occur were the results of conquests by foreigners ; but their sphere was confined, in most cases, to the capitals of the ruling powers or seats of minor proconsular authorities, such as Delhi, Agra, Oude, Murshedabad, Hyderabad, Aurungabad, the Carnatic, Masulipattam, Kurnool, Cuddapah, Trichinopoly under the Mahomedan rule ; Poona, Sattara, Baroda, Indore, Nagpur, Kolapur, Tanjore under the Maharatta rule ; and in recent times Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, and a number of sea-port towns under the British rule.

At all these places many new occupations sprung up to meet the wants and tastes of the rulers and their Courts ; but they made no impressions beyond their immediate neighbourhood, and, when the Mogul Empire began to fall to pieces, all the new occupations, including the fine arts brought into existence and encouraged by the Padshaws and Nawabs, disappeared, or are still dying a lingering death, or exist just to meet the wants of the surviving decaying nobility. So, again, when the Maharatta States fell, various special trades and occupations, fostered under their rule, have



either disappeared, or are in a decaying condition. Superior cotton and silk fabrics; rich embroidery and lace-work; various kinds of arms; costly trappings for elephants, camels, horses, and bullocks; paper of high polish and quality; metalware of infinite variety; carpets of superior pattern and quality in wool, silk, and cotton; superb carriages of native fashion, including palanquins, and a whole host of minor occupations and industries which flourished while those rulers flourished, have been since disappearing or declining or just kept alive by the remnants of those rulers, or by the casual demands of tourists and others from the west.

Since the empire passed into the hands of the British, while no new demand for any of the above or for any new indigenous articles was created, or no new occupations called into existence for the natives of the country (except it be those of butlers, matis, horse-keepers, ayas, and other domestic servants), the industry of the country in cotton fabrics, to which a great impetus had been given by the large investments of the East India Company in the early times of British commercial relations, had to face the strongest competition with British-manufactured cloths, the cost of which had been immensely reduced by the invention of the power-loom. The result was, as is well known, the only national industry of the country on which a foreign commerce was based collapsed, leaving but a handful of looms here and there, which are chiefly engaged supplying colored and bordered cloths of more or less value, chiefly for the female population for whom the grey-shirtings of Manchester have no attraction.

This was not the only blow the country received, though it was the chief. The dresses, the food, the drink, the weapons of the new rulers were of a different kind, and were all supplied from Home, as they, unlike their



predecessors, were an ocean-going people and carried their own stores wherever they went, or had them supplied by their own countrymen who followed them in the capacity of tradesmen, and established depôts and shops at all the principal sea-ports. Those of the people who came into contact with them (and they were but a drop in the ocean compared with the great mass of the population) have, by contracting a taste for the habits and fashions of their new masters, ceased to contribute to the industrial wealth of their own country. Thus it became impossible to arrest the decay and downfall of the doomed occupations and industries.

Philanthropists may sigh over these results and wish, if not the return of old times, which is impossible, that some new walks of industry may be opened out so as to divert labor, which is now almost solely employed on agriculture, to other pursuits. But is there not a mistake lurking under this idea? When agriculture fails and a deficient harvest is reaped, the prices rise abnormally and tell not on the growers of produce and the laborers employed on it, who are mostly paid in kind, but on the artizan and non-agricultural classes. What relief, then, is obtained by adding to the latter number in times of scarcity? The cry for cheap bread emanates from them first, and they form the classes who are first cut adrift from their homes during a famine, while those connected with the land stick to their homes and to their landlords, and are the last to leave. Unless very profitable and permanent branches of industry are opened out, I am diffident of the advantage of diverting labor from agriculture as a means of lessening pressure during a famine; for I do not believe that more of the people depend entirely on agriculture than agriculture is able to maintain in normal times.

India has ever been, and must continue to be, an



agricultural country producing chiefly food-grain and some few raw products, such as cotton, fibres, oilseeds, &c. It can never become a great industrial country like England. Its staple manufactures, such as they were, have been beaten out of the market by the inexorable laws of free trade, and cannot be revived. A change of occupation is opposed to the instinct and traditions of the mass of the people. To bring into existence a diversity of occupations, such as will apparently affect any considerable portion of the people, is therefore impossible. Here and there a few occupations may be forced to live a short-lived prosperity under the auspices of Government, or under peculiar local circumstances. But that is all. Even with high technical and scientific education, the field for accomplishing results on a wide scale is very limited in India, for the reasons which I have already attempted to sketch. I must not be misunderstood as a non-advocate of efforts in the well-meant direction pointed out by the Famine Commissioners. As every little effort tells on social economy, it is the bounden duty of Government to show the way and hold out encouragement for the growth of new indigenous industries, as far as the wants of the present times render such a thing possible. How far Government have already worked in this direction is noticed by the Commissioners. But private enterprise has not been idle. The cotton mills of Bombay and Madras, the jute mills of Calcutta, the indigo factories of Bengal, the sugar-refining establishments at Aska, Chittivalsa, and other places, the iron foundries in the Madras Presidency, the coal mines worked by the Railway Company in Bengal, the tea cultivation of Assam, the coffee cultivation in Wynaad and Travancore, all these and many more attest the results achieved by private enterprise in creating a diversity of occupations in the country. But the money invested in all

these industries being foreign capital, I doubt whether the effects of these are of a permanent kind."

(4) With regard to giving greater publicity to measures under the consideration of the legislature, he thought :—

"In the absence of a representative assembly the Press plays the role of an unbiassed interpreter between the Rulers and the Subjects and is entitled to be supplied with the fullest information, as also the various public associations—political and social. But after all the capacity to understand and form opinions on legislative measures must be pre-existent before the publicity of them can be of any use. The latter cannot create the former. In all ages and in all countries, and even in the most advanced of countries, it is the wise few who legislate for and rule the ignorant many."

(5) Regarding advances from the State Treasury to agriculturists for land improvement and purchase of seeds, cattle and implements he was of opinion :—

"That no country, in the world's history, became rich by borrowing from the State Treasury for the improvement of its agriculture. But Indian Exchequer is in chronic debt. It has never had a surplus lying idle. If a day of surplus ever comes, it is a signal for reduction of taxation. For the State has no right to raise more revenue than it has need for and surplus wealth is better left in the hands of people for private enterprise.....

The system of advances to ryots for purchase of seed or cattle has had a very long trial in the Presidency and was totally discontinued on account of its demoralizing



effects both on the recipients and on the lower grades of revenue agency employed in the distribution of it.

If such loans were made, the interest charged should be the lowest, the repayments should be spread over a long period and the instalments should be enforced with sufficient consideration for circumstances which may overtake the borrower in the course of his career and he should be exempted from all repayment if the work turns out a failure from natural causes or causes beyond his control.

The fear is constant in the mind of the ryot who goes in for improvements that sooner or later the fruits of his pains would be annihilated or absorbed by increased assessments at the periodical revisions of the Land revenue. Nothing therefore short of a *Magna Charta* declaring that such improvements will, on no account, be taxed is likely to remove such a fear from the minds of the people.

Advances can well be made for the planting of Topes. Trees, directly and indirectly, play a very important part in the improvement of all agricultural operations and every effort must be put forth to encourage their regrowth—for with the advent of steam the work of the destruction of timber is much more rapid than their regrowth."

Regarding Government loans for the construction of wells he made a suggestion in these terms :—

"The efficacy of wells and value of cultivation under them being taken for granted, as preventives and mitigants in times of famine,—instead of making the poor ryots of the famine-stricken tracts the agency to create those remedies by means of loans bearing interest (at a rate, however small) from the State (who themselves borrow for the purpose), and hedging such loans with restrictions (however lenient),



and subjecting them to the contingencies of failure and loss in a concern obviously and inevitably beset with uncertainties arising from unknown and unknowable physical causes,—would it not be infinitely better for the Government itself to take the initiative, and magnanimously make up their mind to invest, say a million sterling—a crore of rupees—experimentally in the sinking of 10,000 wells (at an approximate cost of Rs. 1,000 each inclusive of cost of Agency) to be constructed by a special Agency, which will be backed and guided by all the available experience of the local Ryots and of the local Revenue Officers as to the selection of sites, and which will have at its disposal a well-trained “Boring” Establishment equipped with the latest appliances for making trial-boring, the whole being placed under the orders of the Director of Agriculture or a special Commissioner chosen from the Civil Service and assisted by one or two of the most experienced officers of the Uncovenanted branch of the service.

This idea may at first seem a wild one; but I am convinced that it is much more practical, and attended with much less risk and chances of failure than many a project on which millions are yearly sunk. I have heard a rumour that the long-talked-of Periar Project is about to be begun. I had the honour of reading the papers connected with it years ago, and I then felt that it cannot be finished except at an eventual cost of $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 millions sterling. The ‘million’ sterling, which, I propose, should be invested in wells, will, I am certain, have borne fruit long before the Periar Project, and, if success attends it, will justify the investment of another million in the same direction. I almost fancy that my scheme of investment in wells, on a scale worthy of a mighty Government like the British, must go hand in hand with the construction of those feeder-lines of Famine Railways,



for which a portion of £30,000,000 proposed by the Government of India and approvingly reported on by the Select Committee of Parliament is obviously intended. Those lines will convey *food*, while the wells will supply *water* at home, to the starving millions. One is as necessary to the support of life as the other. And, while one can be conveyed in sufficient quantities from distant places, the other cannot.

There need be no hurry or precipitancy in carrying out what I suggest. The first step will probably be for an able and experienced officer to go through the Districts and take note of the existing wells and their condition, and of the reasons why they have (where they have) fallen into disuse, and to ascertain in an approximate way where and how many wells, the people themselves think, could be sunk with advantage, whether for irrigation or for a supply of drinking water only for man and beast, and also what their construction is likely to cost in the various localities with reference to distance or nearness of stone-quarries, fuel for brick-making, price of labor, &c. When, after such preliminary investigation, a fair prospect of success is ensured, the cost of the necessary Public Works and Boaring and Geological Agency required may be approximately estimated with reference to the number of wells for which there may be found room, and the whole machinery for carrying out the project can be set in motion. Operations may be confined for the first year for the construction of the first 1,000 wells. When they are finished, we shall have gained much valuable experience which will help materially in determining the extent of our future operations. Within three years, the success or otherwise of the wells will be established beyond dispute in the estimation of the people, and the only problem which will then remain to be solved will be, what shall Government charge for the



irrigation furnished by the wells so constructed at its own cost? That charge can be so regulated as to yield on the outlay either 2 per cent., or 3 per cent., or 4 per cent., according to the demand and competition which will be created for the water among the ryots, and the Government should rest satisfied even if the return is less than 3 per cent. on the expenditure. The State, as suggested at the end of para. 11, G.O., can charge the difference between 4 per cent. and 3 or 2 per cent. as the case may be, to the famine funds of each year.

I am not so sanguine as to suppose for a moment that any number of wells can stave off a famine in inevitably rainless seasons which periodically recur. But they will help much, hand in hand with Railway lines, to alleviate distress and prevent loss of human and cattle life, and sensibly diminish the cost which each such famine now imposes on the State Exchequer."

(6) About the establishment of Agricultural Banks, the bulk of the capital being raised by subscriptions among the agricultural classes, his views are :—

"It is not possible by any legislation to sever the relation at present existing between the agriculturists and the Mahajans; nor can the Government undertake to pay the people's debts due to the Mahajans; for the sum involved would be colossal.

The belief that there is much capital in the country waiting for investments is totally unfounded."

+ (7) On the question of legislating to prevent consummating the marriage of girls before they are 12 years old, his view was :—

"On mature thought, I cannot help coming to the con-



clusion that the raising of the age to 12, without making an exception in the case of girls attaining puberty before that age, would amount to serious interference with customs, rules and practices, which unfortunately are so closely interwoven with the religious rites and beliefs of the Hindu nation in the matter of marriage institutions, that it is impossible to deal with them separately, without doing violence to widely-spread notions or deeply-felt feelings, however unreasonable or even irrational they may seem in the eyes of Englishmen brought up in beliefs, notions and feelings, the effect of a different education and of the teachings of a different religion and in some measure the resultants of a different climate.

The leading idea of the Hindu legislators—at least the majority and the most accepted of them—seems to have been that no girl should be detained or withheld from her betrothed husband a day after nature has proclaimed her physically qualified for maternity. It is a notorious fact that in the tropics puberty is attained very often at the very early age of ten* and more frequently still between that age and 12. So it becomes a paramount religious duty of the parents to deliver up the girl at the earliest possible date after she attains woman's estate. The parents are thence-

* Note.—Most probably the framers of the Code who fixed the age at 10, must have followed the generally accepted *dictum* which is contained in the text:—

“Ashta Varsha, Bhavet kanya

“Naya Varsha tu rohini.

“Dasa Varsha bhavet gauri

“Atha urdhvam *rajasvala*”

which translated roughly means:—

A girl becomes a kanya at 8, a rohini at 9, a gauri at 10, after that she becomes a *rajasvala* or possessor of the signs of puberty or menses.



forward absolved from all responsibility of guarding the purity of the girl and they, as well as those on the husband's side, most eagerly look forward to the birth of a grandchild, the sight of which gives them both a step in heavenly bliss, to say nothing of the spiritual blessing of a child at the earliest opportunity to the husband who might be deprived of it if perchance he dies in the interval between the dates of his wife's puberty and the attainment of her twelfth year. This reason which underlies the whole question will account, if I have expressed myself clearly, for the great opposition which is manifesting itself all over the country as interference with the religious customs and practices, non-interference with which has been guaranteed to them by the Queen's Proclamation.

The argument *per contra* that the substitution of 12 years for 10 is a very simple matter which ought not to provoke so much opposition from the people at large who never showed any such signs of opposition at the passing of the Code which fixed the age at 10, is scarcely to the point; for very few girls even in Bengal attained maturity at that age and the law practically had thus no operation, and consequently elicited no opposition. The case is entirely different now and the threatened danger of interference is real and serious.

In the statement of Objects and Reasons it is stated that the evil of the existing law arises from the circumstances of its favoring the premature consummation of marriages by adult husbands with children who have not reached the age of puberty. I take this statement as entirely conceding my point, and fully justifying the modification which I suggest. I feel confident that, if it is adopted, the opponents of the measure will be entirely disarmed.

I think the law so amended could be worked with very



much less friction, for I believe, that the fact of *puberty* can be much more satisfactorily proved than the fact of *age*. There are so many feasts and ceremonies by which the attainment of puberty is celebrated among all classes and castes all over India that abundant and reliable evidence of the fact would be always available, while as to the fact of *age*, such evidence must be often most unsatisfactory, inconclusive and often involving medical examination which is so harrowing to the popular feelings of the nation."

(8) In the evidence he gave before the Public Service Commission he said :—

"1. The system of appointing to the Statutory Civil Service young men of high birth, sons of distinguished servants or scions of families who have rendered distinguished services was one that commended itself to the instincts of the people, who have a great respect for high birth. But nominations under such a statute should be reduced to the lowest number.

2. With regard to the Covenanted Civil servants that now come out to India there is seldom any complaint as to *ability* but there is a freely expressed doubt as to qualities springing from high birth at home and high Indian connections, such as there used to be under the old (Haleybury) nomination system. But a competition open to all comers must sometimes present such results.

3. Natives of India decidedly labor under great disadvantages in competing for the Covenanted Service. There is still great scruple in crossing the sea and residing in England. Those who do go lose caste with their countrymen and also lose touch with them.

4. The limit of age should be raised to 22 at least and Simultaneous Examinations in England and India are



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

absolutely the most efficient remedy of all and *the* one which will enable the people of India to reap the fruits of the liberal policy enunciated in 1833."

His concluding remarks are worthy of being quoted :—

"I am of opinion that the time has arrived for doing away with the term "covenanted service" altogether, and designate the service as "Her Majesty's Civil Service" divided into a higher and lower branch, that is to say, the former to consist of the present Covenanted Civil Service (Native and European) and the Statutory Civil Service, and all the *superior* offices of the miscellaneous departments, such as the Revenue Survey, Revenue Settlement, Forest, Geological Survey, &c., and the latter all the upper grade officers of the present Uncovenanted Service, such as Deputy Collectors, Assistant Commissioner of the Salt and Excise Departments, and of the Police Force, Opium, Customs Department, Forest Settlement, Survey, &c. In all these departments there are men who, in respect of gentility, education, and ability and training, are in no way inferior to any to be met with in the Covenanted Service.

My leading idea is that Her Majesty's Service would be thereby welded into one whole service, such as is obtaining (I believe) in all Her Majesty's colonies. There is nothing, as far as I know, in the terms of their covenants which are of a specially punitive nature, or terms as to pay, pension, &c., which cannot be otherwise stipulated for. Nor is it likely that any member of the service will desert so long as it is worth his while to stay in it. Even if desertions take place for want of the security of a covenant, there will not be much difficulty in finding recruits to fill up the vacancies.

If this proposal finds favor it will only be necessary that a Subordinate Executive Service be formed of all those not



absorbed in the two higher branches of the Civil Service. As regards appointments in this service, the system of the general and special tests which has been obtaining in the Madras Presidency with such satisfactory results may with advantage be introduced in all the Administrations, with such modifications as may be necessary to *such* local circumstances.

Besides the Unification of the service the other great advantage would be to *suit* throw open to competition numerous miscellaneous departments of the state service, which are now practically close preserves, and where inefficiency and favoritism reign rampant. There will be a wider field thereby opened for the educated young men of the country, who are now increasing in numbers, year by year, and who will never cease to complain and become disaffected so long as access by open competition (a fair field and no favor) to a large number of departments containing honourable and well-paid appointments is denied to them. A measure, such as I propose, will, I humbly think, crown the labors on which the Public Service Commission are now engaged, and will, more than anything else, assure the wavering, and reassure the assured, among the people of India of the reality and sincerity of the declarations made from time to time by Parliament and the Sovereign in respect of their desire to treat all Her Majesty's subjects alike, without distinction of caste, color or creed."

(9) He held strong views on Tanjore Settlement, on Tanjore Irrigation and the new Kistbundy; and in his correspondence with those in authority he discussed these questions with them and tried to make them see things from his (that is, the people's) point of view.



Re Tanjore Settlement, the following extract from one of his letters to a member of the Madras Executive Council may give a fair idea :—

“ I am not at all so presumptuous as to think that I know all about the subject ; much less to propose that already settled districts should be brought down to the level of Tanjore. Those settlements may be very proper or they may not. It may also be that some have been *over-assessed* while others (like Trichinopoly, so they say but I don't know) have been *under-assessed*. I know that in the actual *modus operandi* of the new settlement very many elements of error and uncertainty exist and have not been overcome in spite of all exertions which may have been made to *reduce to practice* the liberal principles on which the *theory* of the new settlement is based. Some of the difficulties are in their nature insurmountable and some are inseparable from the *modus operandi* employed. On this subject also I have a volume to write, if anybody care for my opinion. I am therefore no unqualified admirer of the new settlement and this will show why I dread its introduction into *Tanjore* in supersession of a settlement which has stood well the test of 60 years and which, *unlike any* settlement effected in the Madras Presidency from Sir Thomas Munro's time, was based on an *average and actual grain standard* derived from the *recorded and measured produce* of the whole district for several years. My idea is that it is to this fact and to *fair moderate commutation prices* which were adopted, Tanjore owes its *stability of revenue* in the first instance and to the Anicut of Sir Arthur Cotton in the second.”

On the subject of Tanjore Irrigation he writes in one of his letters :—



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It is a firm conviction with me and many other Tanjoreans that unless and until a vigorous special department or rather agency is set on foot with full powers to carry out all repairs and improvements (at Government cost) in the existing system, regardless of cost and unshackled by red tape and by the vaticinations of superior (Engineer) authorities, whose local experience and knowledge of existing conditions are conspicuous by their absence, relief to the Tanjore landholder will be as distant and as illusory as ever. The magnificent projects which will immortalise Governors and Engineers may come in their time and need not stand in the way of ordinary and humbler improvements meanwhile. The idea of leaving channel repair long neglected, to the uncertain chances of *kudi maramut*, which is virtually imposing the burden upon the luckless landlords from whom the highest rack-rent is levied under the name of Revised Settlement, must be abandoned."

On the subject of the new Kistbundy he writes thus in one of his letters :—

"The price of staple grain (paddy) has fallen down to an unprecedentedly low figure, the money market is already tighter than last year (only January kist is now being paid) and the accumulated stocks of last year's harvest added to the generally abundant harvest now being reaped and the utter absence of an active demand at any price and also the prosperous harvest in all the Southern Districts (to say nothing of India generally) have created a *glut* and a stagnation, which is already viewed with great alarm. In reading over the discussions which have been elicited on the proposals of the Banks to utilize the Treasury balances with a view to ease off the strain on the money market in these very months, the question I asked myself was how these immense Treasury balances accrued and I found the answer in the fact



that those are the months when the highest revenue collections are gathered in. I again questioned myself, has not the inexorable kistbundy of 4 annas in the Rupee rigorously enforced in these very months been the prime cause of sweeping all the money into the Treasuries,—no matter at what cost and loss to the producers? If so, my arguments for extension of the kist to June will, I trust, find the strongest support in the events which are developing themselves. Should the landlord be subjected to such disastrous losses simply to unnecessarily create a phlethora of money in the coffers of Government—a phlethora which has encouraged Bankers to seek a portion to be used by them (what for?) in advancing loans at high interest directly or indirectly to the self-same landholders to enable them to tide over the crisis? There are of course several things to be said *per contra* but I fain think that I have a strong case in favor of a relaxation of the present kistbundy.”

The extracts given above will serve to show his views on some of the most important political and economical questions of modern India.

One or two things are worthy of note in this connection. A quarter of a century of service under the British Government had not taken from him the power of independent judgment; he has ever been able to take a broad view of questions affecting the interests of the people or the Government, unbiassed by ‘official’ prejudice, and his recorded opinions will be found to be felicitous in thought, manly in tone and racy in expression. When on important questions he differed with



those in authority (and they have always had for him high regard and have been in most cases his personal friends) he strenuously advocated his views in his private, friendly correspondence with them and may be fairly supposed to have been as much instrumental in effecting a beneficent change of opinion as the public bodies of people, who agitate for redress in a different, albeit a constitutional, manner. With regard to things social his belief is that changes for which the people are not prepared by gradual education or elevation must result in a general disturbance of society and put back all progress.



CHAPTER IX.

IN THE TONDIMAN RAJ.

About 1878 the affairs of Pudukota seem to have been engaging the attention of the Government of Madras. Things had not gone well with the native state. A ministerial crisis was impending and the Madras Government wished to take advantage of the position of affairs and do what they could to see the state on its legs again. About this time Sir Madhava Rao, then Dewan-Regent of Baroda, was touring in Southern India, and in the course of his travels had occasion to pay a visit to Pudukota. With the keen eye of an experienced statesman he was able to note several things within his brief stay and wrote a confidential note on the subject to the Hon. Mr. W. Huddleston, Chief Secretary to the Madras Government. The following extracts therefrom may be found interesting:—

“ Referring to the allusion you made to the little native state of Pudukota in the course of our conversation, I think the accompanying brief note may be of some interest or use.



This is one of the very few native states which have survived the progress of British dominions in Southern India and in the continued existence and prosperity of which the native community in general naturally feel a lively interest. The Imperial Government and especially the Government of Madras doubtless also feel a similar interest, because they cannot desire that it should be felt that the longer the British domination exists the more extremely fatal does it prove to the existence, the integrity or the power of the native states.....

The present Rajah of Pudukota is one of those princes who possess in a remarkable degree the power of producing the most favourable impression on visitors. He speaks many languages, English included. This last he speaks and writes with fluency, correctness and elegance which I have not seen surpassed in the whole range of my experience of native princes. He also possesses most agreeable manners. Yet in point of fact he has not been a successful and popular ruler. This is partly due to defective education and bad company in early years and partly to other causes. Besides it could hardly be expected that the old traditional ingrained oriental instincts would disappear in but one generation.

Under proper political checks—checks which cannot be dispensed with even in the instance of the best princes whether Asiatic or European—the Rajah of Pudukota may yet be made instrumental to the progress and prosperity of his little dominion.....

A ministerial crisis appears to be impending at Pudukota.....The choice of a suitable minister is obviously one of the most essential conditions on which the healthy development of the state will depend.....The little state needs reform in several directions. To effect these reforms

a native gentleman of high character, of great capacity, and of considerable experience is required. These reforms being once effected an ordinary minister may afterwards be able to carry on business smoothly and successfully I think therefore that a first-rate native gentleman should be entrusted with these reforms The additional cost thus to be entailed on the state will be repaid manifold. Why not utilise the services of Sashiah Sastri (the Retired Dewan of Travancore) or of Sadasivam Pillay (Retired Chief Judge of the same state) in this direction? The state would be most fortunate indeed to have the advantage of the services of either of these gentlemen for about one year. As the state is a small one with very limited resources it may offer to either gentleman an honorarium, say, of ten thousand rupees for the year. In itself this may not be sufficient inducement but there is the honour to be acquired by putting one interesting native state in order and enabling it to maintain itself usefully and honourably and there is also the approbation of the British Government to be earned in consequence. These considerations may induce either of the gentlemen abovenamed to undertake the work, especially if a judicious appeal be made to their patriotic feelings. Sashiah Sastri is already at Trichy which is quite close to Pudukota. I understand that he is likely to obtain a high appointment in the Madras Presidency in connection with the administration of Public charities. Yet probably a year will be required to bring about that appointment and this interval might well be employed in carrying out the requisite reforms in the Pudukota State."

It was not long before the same idea was suggested to the Rajah of Pudukota by Mr. Henry Sewell, then Collector of Trichinopoly and Poli-



tical Agent of the state. The Rajah wrote to Sashiah Sastri :—

“ As I wish to see you and talk to you on some important matters, will it be convenient for you to pay me a visit at my capital at an early date?.....”

Mr. Sewell in a note to Sashiah Sastri says :—

“ So I presume his letter to you is the result of mine to him. If you do not mind the trouble of the journey I should be glad that you should pay a visit to Pudukota as you would then be able to see for yourself whether there is any real prospect of your being able to do good there.”

So Sashiah Sastri visited Pudukota and saw for himself how things were. But he seems to have felt that it was a regular Augean Stable—almost beyond his power to cleanse, that even if he could undertake it with any prospect of success his road to reform would be beset with obstructions and it would be unwise to risk in a hopeless task what reputation he had already earned. He wrote back to the Rajah and the Political Agent declining the offer. Mr. H. Sewell wrote in reply (May 31) :—

“ So the matter will have to be dropped as you now do not feel disposed to undertake it.

I am very sorry that we have not been able to arrange matters but can quite understand your reluctance.”

But the Rajah was not so easily disposed to acquiesce in this termination of the negotiations.

His letter to Sashiah Sastri deserves to be quoted :—

“ I have this morning received your letter of the 3rd instant and I *really feel very sorry* to find that you feel disinclined to come here as my Sirkele agreeably to my request. I have written my official letter to Mr. Sewell, the Political Agent at my Court, in reply to his official to me, that I am quite willing to give you the post of the Sirkele in my country, with *the full powers* to administer my affairs and to make any revision that would be necessary in my country.....

While I am anxious to have you as my Sirkele and while I have promised you faithfully that I will give you every possible assistance that lies in my power in your administration, &c., in my country to promote my dignity and honour and to restore me to the good will of the British Government, I do not clearly understand the difficulties you feel to come here and to assume the office of my Sirkele with full powers. *As I have entirely made up my mind after mature consideration, to have you only as my Sirkele, pray let me know plainly what difficulties you anticipate by coming here as my Sirkele. After I hear from you of the difficulties you anticipate I will write you back of the manner by which you may feel no difficulties here, while you are here as my Sirkele. I must again press you now that you should kindly oblige me and my state by coming here and assuming the office as my Sirkele for the good of myself and my state.*

I request you again and again not to disappoint me. Truly it will be a great sorrow, loss and disappointment if you will not at all consent to come here as my Sirkele, which, I hope the God Almighty will avoid.”



Sir Madhava Rao also urged his friend very strongly to accept the place as the following extracts from his letters show :—

“ You should by no means refuse to that state the benefit of your knowledge and experience. As natives we cannot but be the well-wishers of native states. Therefore let us do our utmost to set Pudukota on a sound footing.

Do not, pray, say, “ Why should I take any trouble in the matter ? ” Of course, so far as your own interests go, you are quite indifferent. But I appeal to higher motives—there is the great good to be done to the native state. Have you not taken a good deal of trouble in famine relief ? When you have an opportunity to secure good government to some *lacs* of the people of Pudukota you will not shirk !

I have written at so much length because I am most anxious that Pudukota should prosper and its Rajah should rise from his present unenviable position. It would indeed be a great pity if Pudukota fail to benefit by you who are so near. Here is a suffering patient, and here is a first-rate Doctor—quite near him. What can be more desirable than that they should be brought together !

You may not be able to do all the good to be desired. But you will do *some* good. I do not think it is ever given to any one to carry out all he wishes.”

Again :—

“ Sometimes I have seen insects flung by the wind and struggling for life on the surface of water. I have seldom passed without extricating them ! You can therefore



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

appreciate or excuse my feeling for a little native state in a similar predicament !

..... Great improvements introduced by you can hardly be upset afterwards. Besides we are not to be deterred from doing good because such good might be neutralised afterwards. Your reputation is so established and high that be the result what it may, that reputation could not suffer to any degree—I am sure of this.

I cannot say how much I desire that the little state should have the immense advantage of your services for however short a period. Even if you did nothing more than lay down a plan of well-considered reform, you would be benefiting the state, for your plan will be a valuable guide to the state and the Madras Government who are somewhat in the dark as to the course to follow.

Many native states have gone. Tanjore is no more. In the Madras Presidency there remain only Travancore, Cochin, and Pudukota to speak of. The two former are pretty safe. I am sincerely and earnestly anxious for the third state. . . .

In these circumstances I must again press you to vouchsafe to Pudukota what it so much requires—the services of a first-rate man."

The Hon. D. F. Carmichael, Chief Secretary to the Madras Government, also wrote :—

"I will not miss a post in acknowledging your note of yesterday's just to hand.

We shall all be most happy to see you at the helm at Pudukota. I have ascertained that it will not be held to interfere in any way with your continuing to be Member of Council. I have been reading Pudukota Reports and writ-



ing Pudukota Government Orders ever since I was an Under-Secretary and it is really quite sickening to see how reform hangs fire. At one time you know they threatened to turn the Raj into a Zemindari. His ancestors were our staunchest allies at a time when a contingent of Kallar matchlockmen and spearsmen was by no means to be despised; and every Englishman, not a thoroughbred annexationist, would be glad to see the little state on its legs again. I think some of the numerous Political Agents might have done this but beyond pages of dreary report and blame, they have done little or nothing. The chance has now fallen to you and though you have earned and obtained an honourable retreat and 'filthy lucre' is no object to you, still patriotism and the love of doing good, I know, will never die in your breast and I earnestly trust you will undertake the post for the reason so eloquently urged by Sir Madhava Rao."

These earnest representations and requests induced Sashiah Sastri to change his mind and he signified his willingness to accept the place. He was accordingly appointed in August 1878. In reporting the appointment to the Madras Government the Political Agent wrote :—

"His Excellency the Rajah has agreed to give Rs. 500 per mensem as salary and a personal allowance of Rs. 500 making Rs. 1,000 in all to the Hon. A. Sashiah Sastri so long as he is Sirkele. Although the amount may seem large compared with the revenues of the state, I feel sure that the outlay will be thoroughly remunerative in the end to the state. No actual period has been fixed for the Hon. A. Sashiah Sastri holding the office, as he was unwilling to bind himself



down, but he hopes to give the Rajah his services for three or four years at least."

In the order of appointment signed by the Rajah and the Political Agent, he was authorized to appoint or remove all public servants below a certain grade; for a few high offices the Rajah's sanction was necessary. Whenever new reforms in the state were to be introduced a reference had to be made to the Rajah previously and carried out with his approval.

When Sir Madhava Rao heard of his acceptance of the office, he wrote from Baroda :—

"I sincerely congratulate the state and its Rajah, even more than yourself. I am sanguine that you will be the means of saving this native state and of placing it on a safe and durable footing and thereby of doing the greatest good to the Rajah.....I feel sure that the results of your administration will be excellent and am glad you are going to give me a share of the credit! Well, I must say that I have been most anxious for the regeneration and prosperity of the little state with whose Rajah I have been very long acquainted....."

Writing to the Rajah he said :—

"I think this is the most fortunate thing that can occur in the interests of yourself and the state. I can assure your Excellency that Sashiah Sastri is one of the most distinguished natives India has produced and he is intrinsically a very good man. He is just the man that is capable of placing the state on a safe and durable footing and of



promoting your own honour and dignity. He possesses all the requisite ability and he stands very high in the estimation of the Madras Government. In short much larger and more important states might envy Pudukota for having so easily secured the services of such a man. I shall hope that before long the relations between Government and your Excellency will be re-established on the *best* footing. This obviously is a matter of the most vital importance. With a person of Sashiah Sastri's weight, the Political Agent will have no need to interfere much in the internal administration."

Sir William Robinson, Chief Member of Government, wrote to Sashiah Sastri :—

"I have rarely felt greater satisfaction than your communication telling me of the Rajah of Pudukota's resolution to associate you with the administration of his territory. I am satisfied that it will work greatly to his own honour and credit and for the benefit of his people."

Later on in the same year writing to the Rajah, he said :—

"I have at heart the true advancement of our native states and their rulers and shall ever feel so towards both—and be assured that the key is absolutely in your hands—for this is the desire of the Government throughout every part of India. A good ruler will have the fullest respect and support.

Your Excellency has laid the soundest foundation for the realisation of this by the employment of the tried native statesman you have called to your aid in your arduous work towards those subject to you and I am sure you will bless



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

the Providence who has led you to this step as beneficent results of your rule develop themselves."

The Governor of Madras, His Grace the Duke of Buckingham, expressed gratification at the appointment and had no doubt that the arrangement would be attended with early and permanent benefit to the state and later on the Secretary of State for India expressed his satisfaction that the Rajah should have availed himself of the services of so competent a minister.

Sashiah Sastri entered on his duties at Pudukota on the 8th August 1878 and retired on the 24th November 1894. In the first half of these 16 years he was Sirkele (the office being afterwards designated by the more familiar name of *Dewan*) and in the second he was Dewan and Regent. What he did for the state will be succinctly told in the following pages.

Entering on the duties of his office he was, at the outset, seriously embarrassed by the critical state of the finances. The state was hardly out of the effects of the dire famine of 1877 and the seasons were adverse. As he puts it in a letter to the present Ruler of Travancore :—

"The old proverb "There is many a slip betwixt the cup and the lip" comes home to none so truly and painfully truly as to the poor cultivator here. One rain too little—one rain too much—one contrary wind when the ears are



filling—an unwelcome shower when the harvest is ripe for the sickle—all or any of these is enough to dash down the cup of prosperity.....The sins of Pudukota are indeed many, but I trust a three years' famine will be deemed sufficient punishment."

With an empty treasury and adverse seasons reforms or improvements involving outlay were out of the question.

When he took charge of the administration the total acreage, according to the public accounts was 6,70,000 acres, of which broadly speaking a little over $\frac{1}{6}$ was fully assessed, called 'Ain,' nearly a half was free of assessment or lightly assessed, about $\frac{1}{3}$ was Peramboke (occupied for public purposes and immemorial waste). The rest was arable and fit for extension of cultivation. Of the *Ain* lands 16,000 acres were held under *Amani* or sharing system, 58,000 were under money assessment and 29,000 were held on conditional leases.

For several years past the acreage under the *Amani* system had been diminishing year by year owing to the evils inherent in that tenure and to the consequent preference given by the ryots to the money assessment on which they sought and obtained lands according to the influence they commanded.



The evils of the *Amani* system and the change that he introduced cannot be better described than in Sashiah Sastri's own words :—

“ A very large portion of the lands under cultivation, and believed to be of the best kind were held under this system. *The property in these lands vested in the Cirkar.* The ryots were in most cases tenants-at-will, and theoretically could be turned out without their consent. The transfer or sale of such lands was void at law. The crop raised by the Ryot (at his own expense generally, and at times assisted with seed grain from Cirkar) was shared half and half* between him and the Cirkar. He removed his share to his own house, and carried the Cirkar share to the granaries provided for the purpose, and if there were none, kept it in his own house either in trust, or under the lock and key of the responsible Cirkar Village Officers. These were the main features of the system, and to one who knows no more, they must appear on their face to be very just indeed. What could be more fair ? The Ryot and the Cirkar, by sharing the crop equally, share equally the vicissitudes of season and market.

During a life-long career of service I have had opportunities of watching closely the working of the sharing system in all its varied forms in many districts of the Madras Presidency as well as in Travancore and my experiences have been of an interestingly sad kind. To tell the whole tale would occupy more space than would be justifiable in this place. I shall, therefore, content myself with stating briefly what is the case in this state.

* This was the prevailing proportion, but it varied in special cases, sometimes $\frac{2}{3}$ and sometimes $\frac{1}{2}$ and so on.



The system is saturated with evils and frauds of a grave nature.

(a) The Ryots having no heritable or transferable property never cared to cultivate the Amani land in due season. If you saw a bit of cultivation at the tail end of the season, the chances are it is 'Amani.' Ryots prefer infinitely to cultivate other lands held on different tenures such as Inam, Jeevitham and money assessed lands. To prevent this, a penal agreement is forced from them to the effect that they would not fail to cultivate the 'Amani' lands first.

(b) As soon as the ears of the grain make their appearance an army of watchers called *Kunganies* (literally eye-watchers) is let loose. As they get no pay for the duty and are for the most part the old Militia of the country on whom this kind of work is imposed since fighting times had departed, and get a grain fee on the crop they watch, their watch is at best often lax.

(c) When the crop arrives towards maturity, it is the turn of Cirkar Village Officers, and the village headmen (called Mirasidars here) to go round the fields, and note down the estimates of the crop. That there is considerable wooing and feeing at this stage goes without saying. As in other matters, so in this, the race is to the rich and woe to the poor.

(d) As soon as the Village Officers have done, and reported the first estimate, down come special estimators from the Taluq Cutcheries to check the first estimate. Their demands have equally to be satisfied. Then comes the business of obtaining permission to cut and stack the crops. Here again another stage, where much feeing and grudge-paying take place. If permission is delayed just two days, an adverse shower of rain irreparably damages the crop on

the field, or over-exposure to the sun renders the grain unmarketable.

(e) Then comes the threshing and division of grain on the threshing-floor. What takes place then may be imagined. If the outturn is less than the estimate, the Ryot is made responsible for the *difference* without any further ado. If it is more, woe be to the *estimators*. The result in the latter case is often that the difference is made away with, and shared half and half between the Ryot and officers concerned. During all this time, the unpaid army of watchers continues on duty.

(f) Now the Cirkar grain is removed to the granaries. Is all danger over now? By no means. A fresh series of frauds commences. The granaries have neither impregnable walls, nor are their locks Chubb's patents. The half-famished Vettiyan, the hereditary watchman of the village, mounts guard; and he and the village headmen are personally held responsible for any deficiency which may occur on the re-measurement of the grain *out* of the granary. It often happens the poor Vettiyan, stung by hunger, is driven to certain deeds much against his conscience. Scaling over the mud walls or forcing open the too easily yielding village locks, he helps himself from time to time to what his urgent wants may dictate. It is not often he is able to replace, even if he was so minded, what he has appropriated, before the day of reckoning comes. This comes sometimes soon, and sometimes late, depending on the time when the paddy is required for Cirkar purpose, or for sale to purchasers. When it does come, there is crimination and re-crimination without end; the Vettiyan charging the Mirasidars and the Mirasidars, the Vettiyan. The Cirkar Officials, to vindicate its robbed rights, come down heavily on both, and often both



are ruined. If the misappropriation is made in very small quantities, the way of replacement is very ingenious, a quantity of chaff or a quantity of loose earth, or a quantity of big grained sand is put in to make up the measure.

(g) Time passes and the months denoting favourable markets come round. There now remains the business of disposing of the Cirkar grain from the granaries. Simple as it may appear, enormous difficulty is experienced, and we have to face another series of frauds now on the part of the Taluk or superior officers. Tenders are invited, but only a few come and they bid low. Tenders are again invited, but to no better purpose. At last come upon the scene, a set of unscrupulous fraudulent tradesmen, or relatives or friends of those in authority or mere speculators professing to give security, which is really worthless. These men bid higher and take up the grain in lots as they require. They remove the grain but make no payment down, but enter into promises to pay value in eight instalments and profess to give due security for the fulfilment of the promise. It not unfrequently happens that the purchaser decamps and his surety is found to have followed suit or found to be hollow. The money due on the sales to the relatives and friends of the officers outstands the longest. If, to avoid these troubles, the grain is taken direct to the nearest market to be there sold outright for cash, few could be induced to pay the market price, the Cirkar grain being notoriously bad crop, and unscrupulously adulterated.

Such is a brief resume of the beauties of the 'Amani' system. Complaints against the system on the part of the poorer Ryots were rife. The state was ringing with the news of the plunder practised every day. Honest-minded higher officers found themselves helpless to apply a remedy. The evils in all their realities came home to me. To knock



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

the system on the head was the only remedy possible, and to this I had to apply myself as soon as I ascertained the wishes of the people, and had the leisure to begin. A beginning was made to substitute money assessments. It met with success, and would have been carried through but for the unfortunate character of the season which deterred the Ryots from entering into immediate engagements.....

After discussion with the principal and experienced officers of the state and with some of the leading Ryots and others holding lands and ascertaining, from their opinion, that the acceptance of the proposed scheme might be calculated on, it was proposed and ordered that an assessment should be fixed on the Amani lands equal to the value of Melwaram or Government share of the produce actually yielded during the five years from Fusli $\frac{1281}{\text{A.D. 1871-72}}$ to Fusli $\frac{1285}{\text{A.D. 1875-76}}$ commuted at the average selling price of those years which amounted to a trifle over Re. 1 per collum of paddy. These five years were chosen because they were fairly good years and immediately preceded the famine years, 1876-77, 1877-78, and 1878-79, in which the crops were nil or very poor in many villages, and the prices ranged from 3 to 5 times the normal market price.

The accounts kept under the Amani system furnished data regarding the produce of each field, or each holding in each year cultivated by each man and also of course the selling prices of each year.

The total commuted values of the Melwaram of each year gave the lump money assessment which divided by 5 gave the average assessment.

There had been a Pymash or a general Survey of the lands, which extended to most villages of the state several years



ago. Where the Pymash was wanting, or these accounts were missing the Amani lands in each man's occupation were now measured by the Ryots through their kurnums. It had been customary for some time back to give Putta to each Ryot which specified the lands in his possession cultivated from year to year. Though the cultivation areas were sometimes probably guess-work, still they were near the mark generally. There were therefore materials for approximately determining the extent of the lands in each man's possession, on which the commuted value of Melwaram had to be assessed.

If fresh lands were taken, the rates of assessment deduced as above for the cultivated lands nearest to them were made applicable to the fresh lands."

The remarks of Sir Walter Elliot are interesting in this connection. It may be remembered that he was the gentleman under whom Sashiah Sastri had learned his first lessons in Revenue administration. He says:—

"I am very much obliged to you for sending me the copy of your Report for Fusli 1289 of your administration of Pudukota state, which I have read with the greatest pleasure. I have been more particularly interested with your account of the reform of the Amani system and with the sound and judicious views you enunciate and on which your reforms were based. I have lately been looking into the subject of normal land tenures generally to which my attention was turned by the state of things in Ireland and I read a paper at the meeting of the British Association for the advancement of Science, at York in September last, in which I took occasion from my knowledge of the tenures of



land in India to show that the proprietary right to the land, in all countries, was originally vested in the occupant subject only to the payment of a moderate land tax for the support of the state. The old fiction of the Cirkar being the landlord and the ryot the tenant was what led to the Amani system and to the exorbitant demand of the ruling powers when a money assessment was introduced. I therefore quite go with you in all you say from paras. 158 to 175 and I congratulate the Pudukota ryots in having fallen into such good hands. I will only remark that a *Melwaram* of one-half of the produce is far too high—one-third of the gross produce or one-half of the *net*, after deducting all expenses, is the extreme limit of the public assessment and even that is too much to secure all the results you anticipate in page 174 under all circumstances. In two of your dicta I thoroughly go with you—in insisting on the absence of all remissions (page 169) and in fixing adequate salaries to subordinate Revenue officers (183). We had a good exemplification of the consequences of the contrary practices in Masulipatam. So I can only add that I trust you may long be spared to carry on your excellent plans and that I may live to hear of your success."

This measure—which converted *mere tenants-at-will* into *proprietors*, which gave a *money value* to lands that in the previous system had none and which thus at one stroke *created* a source of tangible wealth to the agricultural classes, they being now able to mortgage, transfer or sell *their* lands, whereas under the previous system transfers and sales were void at law—was made the subject of complaints now and then and sought to be



turned to political account by interested agitators. It was said :

(1) The incidence of the assessment on wet lands was high,—higher than in the alluvial lands of Tanjore—and unequal.

But it must be remembered that the rates were based on the known recorded share of Government crop, the assessment paid was simply the money value of the Government share of the produce, which had been previously taken in kind and that therefore there was no room for arbitrary discretion in the matter. The average rate calculated on all the wet lands and their total assessment was Rs. 4-13-8 per acre as against Rs. 5-4-4 in the neighbouring districts of Tanjore and Trichy. It was thus lower instead of higher though the proportion of the Cirkar share (in the state the Cirkar having been *the absolute owner*) was for the most part about 50 per cent.—a fact often forgotten in these comparisons. Sixty-five per cent. of the whole was assessed at less than the average rate. Exceptional high rates were *only on about 4 per cent. of the whole lands* and were more indicative of the exceptional fertility of the lands concerned than of a higher incidence. Though a microscopic minority they however served to be paraded by interested cliques and parties as



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

proofs of high assessment. The commutation price—a little over 1 rupee a collum, which for some years was about the actual ruling price—has for several years past become considerably higher. Sashiah Sastri anticipated such a rise in the commutation price and calculated on its proving a distinct relief to the ryots. As he writes in an official letter to the Political Agent :—

“As regards the commutation rates I propose to make no change in those adopted in the present assessment. It may be perfectly true that prices have been ever since the money assessment was introduced considerably higher than the commutation prices. But it is the high price which has been the helping staff or mainstay of the ryots through all the vicissitudes of the season, and I am altogether for leaving this resource of the ryot untouched, leaving to him all the benefits of high market prices to counteract the deficiencies of crop for which no remissions will be allowed.”

With regard to the inequality of the incidence it must be observed that the commutation of the Government share of produce into money value was virtually a mere arithmetical calculation—noting down the Cirkar share of the crop of each man's holding determined on actual measurement and delivered into the state granaries by each and striking the average money rate so arrived at and apportioning it on the holding. There might have occurred deviations here and there from the general formula; but they were in most cases.



done at the desire and with the consent of the villagers concerned. A new settlement founded on a correct survey and classification of soils, though obviously the proper course, would have been a work of years, but the case admitted of no delay. The data of crop shared and prices were beyond all doubt. But owing to the inaccuracy of the land measure and in some cases the fraudulent motives of village officers, errors must have occurred here and there and Sashiah Sastri proposed, when funds permitted, to remedy what evils there existed by the institution of a regular survey and settlement.

(2) It was alleged that the assessment was fixed on the average produce of five prosperous years. As a matter of fact, the five *successive* years immediately preceding the famine years 1876-77 (which next preceded the year of change) were taken for calculation. In an upland and rain-fed country like Pudukota it would be next to impossible to stumble upon any five year period of *successive* prosperity.

(3) It was said that many ryots emigrated into the neighbouring British districts in consequence of the high assessment. Emigration could at no time be an unusual occurrence in a country of precarious water-supply; but the truth was that many who had left in earlier years unable to



earn a living under the sharing system returned to their ancestral acres encouraged by the security from the oppression and tyranny of the public servants and by the absolute proprietary right they had now acquired. The Census* of 1891 showed that the increase of population in the state was even higher than in the British territory. The general sense of security had given a great impetus to the bringing of new lands under cultivation year after year so that in the course of the 16 years of his administration, as the records show, a considerable portion of arable waste was added to the previous area under cultivation paying full revenue to the state.

(4) The absence of remission for failure of crop or short crop was complained of as a great hardship. But it was an essential feature of a settlement based on *actual* produce of five years—good, bad and indifferent. If remission were admitted “the losses of bad years would be saddled on the state while the profits of good years would go exclusively to the ryots and a poor state could ill-afford to make such a sacrifice. It would also lead to an annual inspection,

* The Census of 1880-81 showed an increase of 8560 over the preceding Census, the decade including the great famine of Southern India. The Census of 1890-91 showed an increase of 60,883 over the preceding.



measurement and report and a general scramble for remission, often involving denial of justice to the poor, enrichment of the rich and utter demoralisation of the lower classes of revenue servants to whom such occasions afford a harvest of plunder." Moreover the extent of *Amani* lands under the changed settlement was but acres 16,028 while acres 58,203 (on money assessment) and acres 29,028 (on conditional leases) were already being held under money assessments and no claims for remissions in respect of them had ever been admitted by the Cirkar. Requests for suspension or postponement of payment were readily and freely granted whenever circumstances justified the course.

(5) The indebtedness of the ryots, especially to the money-lending classes was held by some to be due to high assessments. But an analysis of suits by Chetties against the ryots shows that the ratio of suits for agricultural purposes far from having increased had actually diminished from 21·8 per cent. to 17·6 per cent.

The general poverty of the ryots in the state (the normal condition of ryots in all India is one of poverty and greater or less indebtedness) is due to several causes. The character of the soil in a great part of the state is not of a very high order. There are no alluvial lands under unfail-



ing irrigation—no rich black cotton soils where splendid crops of jonna, cholam or cotton could be grown. The ryots are entirely at the mercy of falling rains. Living on poor and uncertain crops they cannot become *rich* even if they *had* no assessment to pay. It must be remembered that a considerable portion of it goes to meet the postponed dues of past years and what they can save as a provision for future indifferent years is generally frittered away in marriages and other festive occasions which they generally reserve for such propitious seasons and celebrate on a scale out of all proportion to their slender means. They were not richer when they paid the land-tax in kind nor are they poorer now because they pay it in money. It must also be remembered that under the *Amani* system they had no *wealth in land* to speak of and it was Sashiah Sastri's change of tenure that created a substantial value in the land.

The general sense of security and freedom from the thralldom imposed by a vicious system gave a great impetus to the bringing of new lands extensively under cultivation year after year in spite of alternations of good and bad seasons. The acreage yielding land revenue was 1,03,259 in 1878. In the course of 16 years of Sashiah Sastri's administration it rose to 1,63,807 acres.



The enfranchisement of the Inam lands and the resumption of the Western palace Jaghire brought more lands under assessment making the total acreage yielding land revenue 2,13,000. As a result of this increase in the acreage the revenue also rose gradually from 2.75 lacs of rupees in 1878 to about 6 lacs.

The summary given above of the results of the change from *Amani* will show that the new system has been on the whole beneficial both to the ryots and the state. But since the introduction of the money assessment complaints came to be made that the general incidence was heavy. The settlement was based on the actual results taken from the public produce accounts; but the results in rates as they affected various villages in various taluks, and even as they affected lands in the same village were very various. Fruitful and well-cultivated villages found the incidence very much higher than villages which had a poor soil or had been indifferently cultivated; the rates ranging from Rs. 3 to Rs. 20 per acre, though only 11 *velis* (out of a total of 6,887 *velis*) were assessed at a little below or above Rs. 20. The high figures, though only exceptional, staggered some of the people and the absence of remission made them even more apprehensive. And even though the ryots were allowed time to think



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

before they accepted the new conditions, the impression gained ground that measures of alleviation were necessary before the circumstances of the ryots could be materially bettered.

As misfortune would have it, one or two seasons that immediately followed the settlement were adverse and the seasons, in general, have been more capricious and more in bad humour than they were ever before the settlement.* The ryots found that with deficient crops (and sometimes it might be with no crops at all) the payment of the assessment was difficult. And when remissions were refused they felt it as a real grievance. The few highly assessed villages (there were only four of them) began to agitate for redress and in the hands of interested agitators formed a convenient handle for crying down the administration. All this led to a widespread impression that the assessment was telling heavily on the ryots. The Madras Government went into the question fully and found

(1) that the average rates Re. 1-1-0 for dry and Rs. 4-13-8 for wet land compared fairly with those in the adjoining British districts,

* It has been sometimes quaintly remarked that so long as the lands were the ruler's they shared his good fortune and the influence of his lucky stars. (For the stars of a ruler *must be good*). But when they changed hands they changed fortunes as well.



(2) that 67 per cent. of the dry land was assessed at less than 1 rupee,

(3) that in wet lands though some of the rates were high 96 per cent. of the whole was assessed at less than Rs. 10 and 65 per cent. at less than the average rate Rs. 4-13-8,

(4) that the general weight of the assessment could not be said to be heavy and there was no reason to suppose that the commutation had not on the whole been equitably carried out.

They hoped that Sashiah Sastri would institute a scientific survey and classification which would correct the inequalities of incidence, where there were any.

Sashiah Sastri seems however to have felt that a certain measure of relief was necessary in certain cases. The year 1892 was exceptionally disastrous and loss of crop both wet and dry occurred more extensively than in any previous year and following as it did two successive bad years the resources of the ryots were so crippled that they were ill-prepared to stand another and more crucial test. The character of the season offered a very favourable opportunity for taking some decisive steps to re-assure the ryots that Sashiah Sastri fully sympathised with them in their losses. Accordingly he granted certain permanent reductions of the revenue demand, by

proclamation in the State Gazette. These measures and the motive for them are clearly set forth in a letter of his to Sir Henry Stokes (First Member of Madras Government) from which the following extracts are made :—

“ You will be sorry to hear that the season did not right itself and I am left to face a disastrous failure of crop over a very large area. I have somehow or other got in my first 5 kists with a deficit of some 30 or 40 thousand rupees or so. But the realisation of the remaining 3 kists is exceedingly difficult. I have confidentially warned the Tahsildars to use no distress, I mean distraint of property and cattle, but to do their best short of that. This is the *first worst* year I have yet encountered in my 14 years' administration and I am fairly at my wit's end how to pilot my 'Finance' through such a year.

The ryots had got quite disheartened and as they were always complaining of heavy assessment which followed my abolition of the Amani system and which though I proved to Government in my special report 5 or 6 years ago was nothing but the result of a settlement based on an average of 5 years' actual results obtained under the Amani system was still in some respects heavy and unequal in its incidence, I thought that the present year was peculiarly opportune for proclaiming those measures of substantial relief which I had been myself contemplating for some years and which I had staid only because the necessity for money for *finishing* the large public works I had begun, *viz.*, Roads, Tanks and Public buildings, was *imperious* and I had to wait till that necessity had passed away or very nearly passed away. Thank God, I have done with all my Public buildings and Tanks with but two exceptions, the new Hospital



among the former and the new big Reservoir among the latter, and I considered it but due to the people as well as to my own conscience that I should at once give effect to the long contemplated measures of relief of assessment. The enclosed paper containing the notification I issued will give you an idea of what they were. The high assessment on garden-crops under wells was a prolific source of complaint though I had once reduced it to half. The tax on trees on Putta lands was another source of vexatious interference with the rights of the people over what were their own property. The other two notifications show the reductions in rates of land assessment generally. My first idea was to confine the reduction to rates above Rs. 10 per acre (wet) but then it at once struck me that this would have been wrong and since all the assessments were based on *average* of actual results it was but just that all classes of lands should participate in any measure of general amelioration.

These notifications coupled with the promise of *state loan* as soon as the Rules could be got ready have re-assured the whole state and already applications for loans for sinking wells are pouring in and in many villages where the crop had failed, people are at work digging away wells in the rice-fields and endeavouring to raise cholam and other light crops less for their own food than for fodder for cattle, the safety of which is threatened both by want of fodder and scarcity of water brought on by the prolonged drought. I also hope that this re-assurance will also have the effect of telling favourably on the realisation of the remaining kists. I have of course also sanctioned *tank repairs* on a large scale in principal centres of the worst affected tracts. So people find ample employment and means of living near their homes.

I am keeping a vigilant and anxious watch and will spare



myself no trouble to alleviate the distress of the people in this year of their trial....."

By these concessions the special assessment on garden-crops was abolished and replaced by the ordinary rates and all rates higher than Rs. 60 per *veli* on wet lands were remitted altogether and to extend the relief all along the line as it were proportionate reductions were made on lands assessed under Rs. 60 a *veli*. The tax on trees on Putta lands, vexatious out of all proportion to its magnitude, was also done away with. Similar relief was granted to the Devas-tanam villages. The total remission of revenue amounted to over half a lac of rupees—about 8 per cent. of the entire Beriz of the state.

Sir Henry Stokes wrote in reply :—

"The settlement of land revenue is a vital measure and the remission by a stroke of the pen of no less than half a lac or $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the demand is no trifle in the present condition of the finances of the state. I must say that I think your proceedings in these matters savour more of the Regent than of the Dewan and that in issuing orders about them without obtaining the approval of this Government you have forgotten that you are conducting the administration of the state under the supervision of the Madras Government.....You cannot expect that we should abdicate all supervision and control."

The Madras Government viewed with disapproval Sashiah Sastri's action in having remitted



without their sanction a considerable portion of the land revenue demand and communicated their views to him. Sashiah Sastri felt sorry that his procedure had subjected him to the disapprobation of Government. But his thankfulness that his beneficent measure had not been interfered with was much greater than his sorrow.* His maxim, as expressed in one of his letters to a friend, was "Legislators must be left to act according to their lights and their conscience, regardless of fear or favour from anybody or bodies of men." He thought long before he acted. He knew that many could not see as far into the future as he, and therefore in many cases had not the data to read his actions aright. Hence he set little store by 'popular feeling'—more so when he had reason to believe that behind it there lay the influence of interested agitators. When however he came to see that he had gone wrong he had the generosity to make a handsome reparation, and that, in his own way and when he thought fit. Intimidation and clamour never succeeded with him.

One or two minor measures which had a

* As is evident from the following words of his, *apropos* of this:—
"Thank God, disapproval is only for action without reference to them. This means the action remains untouched and approved."



marked effect in ameliorating the condition and well-being of the ryots may be here mentioned.

The village accounts exhibited large sums of arrears outstanding against the ryots for a long series of years. These always hung over their heads like the sword of Damocles and placed them completely at the mercy of the village Monigar and Kurnam, who had it in their power to come down upon them at any moment and distrain the crop and whom it was therefore necessary to bribe or humour in various ways. A scrutiny was made into these arrears and most of them were written off. This at once freed them from their thralldom to the village and other servants.

No regular Essanwari (Kudivaram) accounts had been kept systematically posted up to date and in the absence of them, it was impossible to find at a glance what each ryot owed to the Cirkar. This made it difficult for Tahsildars or other superiors to check the balances periodically. After a great deal of labour, these accounts were drawn up and brought up to date.

The Village Kurnam's fees payable in kind were commuted into money. This was rendered necessary to complete the emancipation of the ryot from all manner of interference with his crop.



The circumstance that all the village accounts were kept on palmyra leaf added greatly to the difficulty of examination and check. The palmyra leaf had therefore to be superseded by paper and all the village accounts were ordered to be kept on paper stitched in regular books which were paged and sealed at the Taluq Cutcherries and in which alone the daily collections from the ryots were to be entered.

There was no systematic granting of receipts to ryots for payments made by them and this left a wide door for embezzlements and for cheating the ignorant ryots. Regular (kachat) receipt books, with printed headings, to last five years or more, were introduced and were distributed to each ryot and no payment was recognised or admitted which was not first entered therein by the Monigar. This furnished to the ryots a great safeguard against extortion on one hand and to the Cirkar against embezzlement by furnishing a ready means of detection.

A systematic hearing of petitioners personally by the Dewan on a stated day in the week was also instituted with the happiest results. The ryots were brought face to face with the head of the administration, at least 40 times in the year (allowing for holidays and other interruptions) and they were encouraged to tell their tale

of hardships and grievances without reserve. The numbers who attended on a petition day varied from 100 to 150. It was heavy task to hear them but was amply repaid by the results. It brought the people in close touch with the Minister of the State. It enabled him to form a fair idea of their hardships, real or fancied, remediable or irremediable ; of the general character and conduct of the various servants below from the Village Monigar and Kurnam upwards to the Tahsildar. It was from representations made on these occasions that foundation was laid for many a reform and means were found to correct many an abuse and to punish many a peccant servant. The most insignificant person in a remote corner of the state felt that there was an eye watching his movements and noting his way unerringly and that it therefore behoved him to keep his house in order. This sense of responsibility, permeating as it did all classes of people, raised the moral tone of the whole of the state.

It has been already remarked that the change from *Amani* had been dictated by urgency and admitted of no delay—such as a regular survey and settlement required. In view to correcting the inequalities found in the existing assessment, caused by the absence both of a correct measurement of area and a correct classification of soils,



measures were set on foot in 1893 for a Revenue Survey and Settlement. Sashiah Sastri, in the proposals he submitted to the Political Agent on the subject, thought that the work would be best conducted by a staff consisting of men of local knowledge under experienced control and he hoped to organise and make use of the agency of a Ryot's Punchayet composed of the respectable Mirasidars or headmen of each village to go round with the classifiers and attest their work either in token of approval or with remarks of their objections which would receive the attention of the supervising and checking agency. He proposed also to give the benefit of the original commutation rate to the ryots and make *a very fair allowance* in determining the rates on the soil, as a compensation for the absence of annual remissions. Sashiah Sastri thus concludes the letter :—

“ If it be the pleasure of God to vouchsafe me life and health and if it be also the pleasure of Government to vouchsafe me the same confidence and support which I have already had at their hands, the proposed settlement will be the closing act of my administration.

There is still much land fit for cultivation unoccupied and if I succeed in establishing a moderate assessment which is the keystone of all successful settlement, not only will the present Land Revenue which is nearly treble what it was



when I came, be placed on a secure footing, but I confidently hope there will be a considerable and rapid addition to it when the springs of private industry are no longer clogged by uncertain and excessive assessment, or by constant and vexatious interference on the part of the Revenue officials."

Writing to Sir Henry he says :—

"In the matter of the proposed Revenue Settlement also I beg to express a hope that my proposals in outline may meet with the approval of Government. My long experience in revenue matters inspires me with the confidence that I shall be able to do justice to the subjects of the Tondiman and to the Tondiman also."

Writing early in 1894 to Mr. J. Grose, Member of the Madras Council, Sashiah says :—

"The young Rajah will be installed in November and the only thing which will induce me to stay on (supposing the Rajah himself inclined to keep an old minister) is the desire to see to its completion (or at any rate, to a fair way towards completion) the Revenue Survey and Re-settlement which have been just started and which it has long been my ambition to work out on my own lines so as to make it and bequeath it as a real *Magna Charta* to the ryots of this state for all time to come."

Young men, natives of the state, some already in the service, were selected and sent out for being trained in the several processes of the cadastral survey which was being carried on in the neighbouring district of Trichinopoly. When they returned duly qualified and as soon as a small complement of instruments, chains, &c., was got ready, actual field work was begun with



a party of Surveyors and Deputy Surveyors and by 30th June 1894 (the end of the fasli year) fair progress had been made.

Owing, however, to a doubt thrown on the competency of the Agency employed for conducting the Survey, the operations had to be conducted within very circumscribed limits pending inspection and report by a superior officer from the British Revenue Survey under orders of the Government of Madras. This led to delay and a state of suspense, which was far from favourable to fair progress. The cadastral work done was pronounced by the Deputy Superintendent of Revenue Survey to be fairly correct and the block maps neatly executed.

When Sashiah Sastri retired the work was stopped for a time and in April 1895 was placed under the superintendence of an officer of the Madras Survey.

Next in importance to the abolition of the *Amani* system was the enfranchisement of Service Inams. Much available assets lay neglected in Amarams or Militia tenures which had been long out of date and the services connected with which were no longer required.

The holders of the service tenures were mostly the ancient militia of the country who in times of yore used to be employed sometimes for fighting



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

with neighbouring Poligars, on several occasions as contingents to the British troops at Trichinopoly in their marches to Seerangapatam and other places at the close of the eighteenth century, sometimes in guarding temples, palaces, cutcherries and forts ; and also and more extensively as watchmen of the crops under the *Amani* system. On the occasion of the death of each holder, an inquiry was made and the lapse was reported for orders as to succession. Though it was only a formal affair, it led in many cases to underhand corruption and to the levy of black-mail by the village and other officers on the poor and ignorant holders and the report was left to pend for long periods causing a state of great suspense as the tenures were theoretically liable to absolute resumption at any time at the pleasure of the Ruler. They were, of course, inalienable and the holders had no property in them.

The Government of Madras in reviewing the report for Fasli 1291 (1881-82) had remarked thus : "The total acreage under Inam (3,11,054 acres) greatly exceeds the acreage (2,28,860 acres) at present paying revenue to the Rajah." The Government further added that "they have frequently advised that this difference should receive the serious attention of the Pudukota authorities, not with any view to confiscatory



measures, but in order to enfranchise on suitable quit-rents the antiquated service tenements and generally to bring the others under some such settlement as was effected by the Madras Inam Department. The details of that settlement are perfectly understood by the present Minister of Pudukota, and the Government trust that he will ere long have leisure to attend to the matter." The subject had been engaging his attention ever since his advent, but as it was an important subject demanding careful enquiry and delicate handling, especially in a native state, he had been at intervals of leisure making himself familiar with the various tenures and collecting reliable information for a comprehensive treatment of the subject. The necessary rules were framed and submitted for the previous approval of the Rajah in 1884. His Highness, however, was desirous of more information on the subject regarding the treatment of certain descriptions of Inams and the subject had been lying over year after year for this and other causes. In the year 1886-87 as a preliminary step a special Agency was set on foot to collect information from old records and classify the various tenures from old returns. Special parties of measurers were also detailed to the several taluqs to conduct measurements. The prelim-



inary operations occupied two years. The rules which had been drafted much on the model of the Madras Inam Department came into force from September 1888. Almost all the service tenures were enfranchised. During the six years of the operation 4,817 cases of Inams were enquired into and settled, resulting in a total additional revenue of about a lac of rupees.

“Their enfranchisement on the payment of a moderate quit-rent in commutation of service was a Magna Charta. Lands which were worth nothing came to be valued hundreds and thousands of rupees on their enfranchisement. Several who were hopelessly involved in debt suddenly found themselves rich and solvent. They who had opposed it at first found themselves mistaken and hailed the enfranchisement of the tenures as their deliverance.”

Those descriptions of Inams which formed the endowment of Devastanams, Mosques, Mutts and similar religious institutions or which were granted and held for the support of Chuttrams, Oornies or drinking-water ponds, were all simply registered on their existing tenures and confirmed subject to the continued performance of the service or charities.

The other sources of revenue may now be



noticed. The revenue from salt was a monopoly of the state. The state has no seaboard. Only earth salt was manufactured and gathered and stored in depôts and sold for the benefit of the exchequer, the manufacturer being paid in money for his share of the manufacture. Much abuse had crept into the department. In 1882 Sashiah Sastri remodelled the management without any additional cost to the state and passed a Regulation to provide for the protection of the earth salt revenue. The rules which had been in force from time to time for the control of the manufacture and sale of earth salt had never assumed a legal shape. The Regulation of 1882 embodied them into a systematic enactment and provided also for penalties against the importation of Pudukota salt into the British territory. The salt revenue began to improve under the improved management which he had been able to effect and the operation of the very stringent regulation he had passed.

At this stage things took a different turn. The British Government had been complaining from time to time that Pudukota salt was being smuggled across the boundary and requested that some efficient arrangement should be made to prevent the smuggling. On a strong representation made by Sashiah Sastri the



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

Madras Government agreed in July 1882 to let matters stand as they were. But the subject once more cropped up almost immediately and threatened to become a source of misunderstanding between the state and the British Salt Department. The British Government opened the question again and directed that "proposals should be submitted for the suppression of the manufacture of salt within the Pudukota state in consideration of a suitable compensation being assured to the state by the British Government as has been arranged elsewhere." The Board of Revenue had suggested that the selling price of salt in the state might be assimilated to the British monopoly price, as is done under the salt convention with Travancore. But the idea had to be given up for several reasons. In the first place (as in Mysore) the manufacture of salt would have to be suppressed within a zone of 5 miles all round the frontier. This was utterly impracticable as most of the salt pans lay near the borders of the state. So long as this preventive measure could not be carried out the conditions for the illicit manufacture and clandestine removal of earth salt across the borders would remain very favourable as the frontier was conterminous with three British Districts and was a long, circuitous, rambling and irregular line. Then again the



state would have to grant some relief to the people in consideration of the enhanced salt-tax; but the raising of the tax would only double the activity in the direction of the illicit manufacture of earth salt and result in the falling off of the revenue. A strong preventive police would have to be organised and maintained by the state, and if they succeeded to any considerable extent in putting down the illicit manufacture, the state earth salt would find no market, for the British marine salt was purer and more wholesome than the earth salt and a much smaller quantity of it went a much greater way for culinary purposes and the only set off that the earth salt had against these advantages—its cheapness—would no longer exist. Then the Salt Department of the state would come to be worked at a dead loss and the question might once more rise regarding the compensation to the state and the cost of the preventive police.

Thus the only feasible alternative left to the state was the suppression of the earth salt and the Rajah consented to the measure "simply to advance the interests of the British salt revenue and to alleviate a state of things which had already become a source of frequent irritation between the state and the British Salt Department."



In consenting to this step the Dewan was not unaware that it would be felt as a grievous hardship by the poorest people of the state, that even on a modest calculation the British Government would be a considerable gainer even after giving the state what might be regarded as a liberal compensation ; that the gain to the British Government meant so much loss, direct and indirect, to the state; and in the correspondence on the subject, which as Sir Madhava Rao puts it in a letter to Sashiah Sastri was, ' a capital and earnest representation in favour of your state,' these circumstances were forcibly pointed out and supported by facts and figures. But the state had to bow before Imperial necessity and the fiat went forth "*Delenda est Pudukota sal!*" As Sashiah Sastri wrote demi-officially to the then Political Agent:—

"Since you left I saw Mr. Bliss and had a four hours' discussion about our Pudukota earth salt. He is very determined and threatened to carry the matter higher if the Madras Government insisted on upholding their orders, (*i.e.*, letting matters alone). The result of the discussion was that I saw a possibility of giving up the monopoly without injury to the state revenue or injury to the people concerned. As regards the people in whose interests alone my contention was based, of course it will be my business to devise measures by which relief from taxation in some other form is to be given to the people, in mitigation for the



higher price they will have to pay for their salt under the proposed arrangement..... I am myself rather anxious now to come to some such settlement; for I cannot hold long against the onslaught of the Salt Commissioner or suffer the constant irritation to which I shall certainly be exposed.....”

In the interview with Mr. Bliss, then the Salt Commissioner, the question of compensation to the state was gone into in detail and in the paper submitted by Sashiah Sastri on the subject he showed on the statistics then available that a round sum of Rs. 38,000 would just enable the state to recoup to itself the loss of salt revenue, to afford some relief to the people, by remitting house-tax on the dwellings of the poorest classes as a *solatium* for the enhanced salt-tax they would have to pay and to maintain a special police for the suppression of salt manufacture within the limits of the state. This was agreed to. Then came the question regarding the special force. The formation, control and payment of the police, Sashiah Sastri maintained, should be entirely in the hands of the state. The Rajah had permitted him to open negotiations only on this understanding. But the Rajah died in 1886 while the negotiations were still pending. Then the British authorities insisted that the Head of the Preventive Force should be an officer selected



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

from the graded officers of the British Salt Department and remarked that it was only personal feeling which had actuated the late Rajah. Sashiah Sastri strongly contended that it was hardly fair towards the Durbar to harbour such distrust of it and assume such incapacity on its part, and that in dealing with a small protected native state it must be as much the concern of the Paramount Power to protect the rights of that state as to protect the interests of its own revenue. He wrote :—

“It is not a mere question of ‘personal feeling’ which actuated the late Rajah but something much more serious which was at stake. His death has not therefore removed any difficulties. On the contrary that event has placed me in a much more delicate position in the matter than when I was only his minister. I am sure the Government will understand me without my further dilating on the point. I then unreservedly concurred in the views of His Highness and cannot conscientiously see any reason now to change them.....

In these circumstances I feel that I can do no more than adhere in their entirety to the proposals already formulated and I beg to assure the Government that I will loyally endeavour, not only with the aid of the Special Preventive Force but with all the resources at my command, to carry out the wishes of Government and I am much mistaken as to my capacity if with the aid of the special preventive staff which I should be left to arrange according to my own plans and with the willing efforts of Revenue servants of all grades and enjoying the full confidence of Government I do



not attain at the expiration of a few years an amount of success in the suppression of earth salt manufacture, which would command the approval of the Government."

Sashiah Sastri's earnest and vigorous representations were successful: the compensation of Rs. 38,000 was agreed to and the management of the preventive force was left with the Durbar. But as Sashiah Sastri writes:—

"That the measure created great unpopularity goes without saying. Unfortunately the unpopularity was enhanced by the simultaneous raising of the excise duty on salt in British India. The people have become somewhat reconciled to the change, which was inevitable and beyond their control. The stringency with which the law has to be enforced by the Preventive Police against, as happens, the weakest and poorest descriptions of the people and the sudden and the frequent enhancement of the selling price at the fairs by the tradesmen engaged in the traffic are still matters of irritation and bitter complaint."

Next comes the Abkari. As in British India vending toddy and manufacturing and selling country liquor constitute a monopoly of the state. The right was sold to professional contractors in small farms and for a certain number of years. An officer on a low pay of Rs. 15 or 20 was the virtual head of the department, and he managed it and the leasing of the entire farm much as he pleased, that is, in other words, much as his own interest dictated.



Under Sashiah Sastri's vigilant eye, the wholesale frauds which had characterised the management came to an end, the rents were realised more promptly and within ten years of his advent the revenue from this source had quadrupled itself. In 1890 the excise system was introduced and a regulation was passed for more efficient control and management of the Abkari revenue. A central distillery was constructed at the capital town and provided with a superior still and plant and the outlying indigenous stills were suppressed. The right of selling liquors was sold to the highest bidders.

There are no forests strictly so called. But there are jungles of small elevation—scattered over the state—about 60 of them. Six or seven of the larger ones are preserved for the Rajah's hunt and wild pigs and deer form the chief game. The rest are more or less scrubby jungles with little valuable timber; but they furnished fuel for the kilns when the large buildings were erected at the capital. To arrest the destruction of the jungle and to create a new source of fuel supply to the state and the people, a small casuarina plantation was formed in 1884 on the Vellar bank. The experiment was a success. It has been tried on a more extended scale and bids fair to be a permanent means of revenue to



the state and usefulness to the public. A new tope of about 5,000 fruit trees was formed on both sides of the Tanjore Road in the second and the third mile from the town. A good proportion were able to weather the drought by constant watering and have grown up sufficiently to be pronounced safe. A few more smaller topes were also formed.

A new source of revenue was created from stone-quarries. They had been left untaxed and their destruction was going on unchecked, the quarried stone finding its way largely to the neighbouring British districts. It was deemed therefore reasonable to bring the quarries under some sort of control and make them contribute to the general revenues of the state.

When Sashiah Sastri entered office, the gross revenue of the state stood *under* three lacs and a half. In a few years after his advent it began to develop and increase steadily till it rose to nearly eight lacs. The increased receipts were all the legitimate outcome of a healthy and vigorous management of the existing resources. The results of his financial administration cannot be better described than in his own words :—

“The small surplus with which I began my administration rendered it imperative for me to study the utmost economy and to regulate expenditure with reference to the means at



my command. Accordingly the first year was worked so as to leave a small surplus. The next year, when loans from Jaghires were replaced to the extent of half a lac, resulted in a small deficit. From the next year forward the change of the Amani system, and the consequent expansion of cultivation and various other improvements, added to increased efficiency in the administration, all began to tell; and year after year, for the succeeding seven years, was a record of increasing prosperity.

In 1883-84, for the first time in the history of Pudukota, there was literally no room in the Treasury for the money that had accumulated. I then thought it advisable, rather than so much money should be idle, to invest some of the surplus in Government Securities not only as a source of profit but generally as an insurance fund against future years of adversity. There was no intention of hoarding to the prejudice of public interests. The expenditure on public works was allowed to the fullest extent that could have been carefully and economically spent with the agency then available and urgent improvements in other directions were not neglected. There was in that year a surplus of over 9 lacs. Out of this five lacs were invested in Government Securities."

A close study of the actual condition of the several branches of administration disclosed that abuse and corruption tainted the several departments. One of his earliest efforts was therefore to introduce better agency in the personnel of the administration. Officers of bad and even doubtful character were removed and replaced by men more worthy of confidence. Writing to an intimate friend in November 1879, he says:—



"The sad tint of famine is wearing away from the faces of the ryots. His Excellency (the Rajah) plays "the good boy" to perfection and things are getting on smoothly. I have now weeded the service of almost all the bad characters and I hope the new men may prove better."

Immediately after came the general improvement of the salaries (in the first instance limited to the higher offices). Sashiah Sastri's remarks in this connection deserve quotation :—

"Low salaries, engendered by a false sense of economy, are the bane of native states and a stumbling block to reform and good administration. It was no doubt useless to throw away large salaries on dishonest servants who had a *carte blanche* to make as much money by their offices as they could. But it was equally impossible to get honest men at a rate of remuneration in which they could not live decently. A scheme of decent salaries was accordingly proposed and sanctioned in the course of the year. [Here follow the increments.]

It is not pretended that these salaries are very high or even adequate to the high powers exercised by or the responsibilities attached to the offices in question, but they are an improvement on the past and more than that the finances of the state did not admit of. For the same reason it was not found practicable in this year to extend the revision beyond the circle of the higher offices. But I hope to be able ere long to improve the salaries of their subordinates, to the extent at least of placing them above the absolute necessity of corrupt practices."*

The revision of subordinate establishment was soon afterwards taken in hand, but from one

* Administration Report for 1879-80.



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

cause or another it was only in 1886 that the scheme was given effect to, though the subject was never for a moment lost sight of by Sashiah Sastri, who thus refers to it in one of his Reports:—

“Nobody is more anxious than I am to press forward these measures since nobody is more convinced than I am of the utter hopelessness of honesty from extremely ill-paid village servants who form the basis and backbone of our revenue administration.”

When the entire scheme of revision had come into operation he was able to report:—

“The reform has been attended with marked improvement in the personal conduct of the subordinate officers and in the despatch of business generally.”

The tone of the service was markedly improved by these measures. Corrupt servants as well as those tainted with the suspicion of corruption had generally a bad time of it and often found unexpectedly that their services were not required. Sashiah Sastri's procedure in matters like this did not perhaps come up to the notions of a perfectly constitutional government. But he had no faith in uncompromisingly rigid constitutional methods for a native state not very remarkable for the *morale* of its service. As he writes to a friend:—

“A constitutional government is an exotic which does not grow and flourish except in Europe and in countries



peopled by the descendants of Europeans. Even there it is a plant of very slow growth and not firm of root everywhere."

At any rate his methods secured highly beneficial results. When widespread evils, crying for urgent remedies, had to be faced halting or hesitating steps were ineffectual. His strong hand proved a death-blow to a world of malpractices and if a clique, formed partly of the dismissed, disaffected public servants and partly of idle, unscrupulous men who found occupation for their time by joining them, endeavoured to make the higher authorities believe in the existence of general discontent and disaffection, he never allowed any momentary feeling to ruffle him ; but strong in the consciousness of his rectitude and honesty of purpose and assured of support so long as he acted in that spirit, he always felt and acted as if he alone were responsible for good government and as if his shoulders were broad enough to bear any amount of traducement.

He was not ambitious of securing talents or brilliant parts for the service. He was satisfied with servants whose mediocrity was a warrant for uprightness and unquestioning obedience. His own mind was equal to rending an oak or picking up a pin and in a small state, where the slightest misdoing in the remotest corner could



not escape the notice of a clear-sighted and strong-willed administrator, he preferred to have all the strings in his own hand and trust as much to his administrative insight and the requirements of political ethics as to the abstract principles of a theoretic code. As his friend Rangacharlu used to say of him, "Sashiah Sastri is a man of strong likes and dislikes." Strength cannot hope to be infallible; but strength with its defects answers better in statesmanship than weakness with its inefficiency; and of Sashiah Sastri it may be safely asserted, looking at the *tout ensemble*, that no officer possessing such unbounded authority for an uninterrupted period of sixteen years and such unlimited scope for patronage (and its abuse if he were so minded) could have acted more fairly or beneficially in the exercise of his great powers and privileges.

One of the earliest subjects that attracted his notice was the neglected condition of irrigation tanks. In the Notes* he drew up for his guid-

* These Notes were shown to the then Political Agent, Mr. H. Sewell, and received his concurrence. The Notes begin thus:—

1. His Excellency the Rajah has in his private letters promised me full powers and every possible assistance in the administration of the state and in carrying out such reforms as may be necessary. 2. Nothing more can be wished. 3. Still I think it will serve a good purpose—possibly avert future misunderstanding or disappointment—if certain principles of conducting the administration were enunciated and accepted and a rough outline of reforms indicated and recognised.



ance at the commencement of his administration he observes :—

“The tanks are the most neglected of all and require the earliest and fullest possible attention.”

Studying the requirements of irrigation in the state, he was struck with the great number of irrigation tanks which stud the country and which are all so well situated, one below another, and are so connected like the links of a chain, the surplus water of one filling the one next below, that the drainage of the whole country is beautifully regulated and arrested and not a particle of water that heaven may send to the poor cultivator may escape unutilised. He found that the arrangement was simple and excellent and all that was needed was to repair the existing tanks and restore them to efficiency. So in little more than a year after his arrival 227 tanks of Cirkar villages, besides many of Devastanam, Chattram and Jaghire villages, which had all been long neglected, were repaired at a cost of Rs. 25,000—no stinted outlay considering the financial character of the year. As Sashiah Sastri writes in the Administration Report for 1879-80 :—

“If the rainfall had only been favourable, the effect of these extensive repairs to the tanks would have been realised to a marked extent concurrently with the introduction of money assessment. But God willed it otherwise.”



Within four or five years after he came almost all urgent repairs were executed. It had been the practice previously to entrust such works to contractors who turned out the minimum of work at a maximum of cost and playing into the hands of the officers concerned shared the plunder with them. Sashiah Sastri did away with this pernicious system. The Chief Revenue Officer of the state was entrusted with the management. He took the greatest interest in the matter. Under his directions and the immediate superintendence of the Tahsildars who acted under his orders, the villagers concerned who, having by the change from Amani, become the proprietors of the soil, had now a direct interest in the improvements, were almost exclusively employed in the work and with very satisfactory results ; so that Sashiah Sastri was able to report in 1883-84 :—

“ When I took charge of the administration in 1878, I was besieged by applications for repairs of tanks. In the year under report there was scarcely any application, the wants in this respect having been fully met by the unstinted outlay in the preceding four years.”

In December 1884 an unprecedentedly high flood caused by a seven-inch downpour swept over the country, breached about 250 tanks, weakened the banks of numerous others and



damaged and destroyed many sluices. The repairs were emergent and had to be immediately executed. These, together with the strengthening of the bund of the largest irrigation tank in the state, the Kavinad, cost nearly half a lac of rupees. This Kavinad tank had suffered very heavily during the extraordinary floods of 1884 and had a narrow escape from breaching. Under this there is an extensive cultivation yielding an ain revenue of Rs. 20,000 a year besides extensive Inam and other lands. The emergent repairs, all heavy earth-work, were done in May and June 1885 ; and a few years later the syphon under the escape and two sluices were taken in hand and completed under the direct supervision of Mr. Wilks, M.I.C.E., the Special Engineer.

Thus all that was urgently needed was done in a few years after his advent. Most of the tanks in the state had been repaired and rendered efficient. Mr. Wilks, the Special Engineer, inspecting the condition of the tanks in 1887, reported :—

“ In general as far as can be seen, the requirements for irrigation are not many. Water is supplied either from rainfed tanks or from channels which are taken off from the river Vellar. The simple arrangements now in use seem to suit the people better than the more modern irrigation works which would hardly be appreciated here. If the water is sufficient they have little to complain of.”



Much yet remained to be done for irrigation ; but it could afford to wait for skilled labour and competent agency, all immediate and pressing requirements having been satisfied. Meanwhile a scheme for the construction of public offices and buildings for other administrative purposes, long contemplated, was taken up and engrossed the minister's attention and absorbed all the available resources for a period of five years. Immediately after the completion (in 1893) of the large and expensive public buildings Sashiah Sastri proposed to "spend all available funds on works of irrigation, which, in a purely rainfed country, constitute the life of the revenue." He drew up an extensive scheme of irrigation works (including besides earth-work, masonry, river dams and kalingulas) which were estimated to cost two and a half lacs of rupees. Earth-work planned on a large scale (nearly half a lac of rupees) was commenced in January 1893, but while the work was but half done and in full swing the unusual fall of summer rains arrested further progress by filling many tanks and scattering away the agricultural labourers who took to the plough at the sight of rain. Here this part of the programme had to rest as next year he was busy winding up his administration in view to handing over the Raj to the young Rajah.



Expenditure on Public Works had been, ever since he entered office, keeping pace with the increased revenues. The proportion of such expenditure to the Land Revenue collections had been 8·3 per cent. for the nine years before 1878. In the nine years after 1878 (the year of his entertainment as Dewan) the percentage had more than doubled itself. In 1884-85 the percentage was 24—"a result," as remarked by the Madras Government in April 1886, "which may be regarded as satisfactory." Later on in the same year (August 1886) the Government of Madras observed in passing orders on the scheme for the revision of the public establishments of the state :—

"Another matter open to observation is the smallness of the expenditure on Public Works. As compared with the Land Revenue the percentage is much lower than in British territory notwithstanding that here Imperial services, from which the Pudukota state is exempt, have to be provided for."

This observation of the Madras Government had probably a reference to the ten lacs of rupees which had accumulated to the credit of the state and were lying a great part in Government Securities and partly as cash balance. Sashiah Sastri had no idea of hoarding. His object was to devote a great part of the savings to the construction of the several offices and



buildings which were necessary for administrative purposes. The Jail was ill-housed and ill-suited to its purpose and was in the very heart of the market-place. The several offices of the capital were scattered all over the town and in various corners of the palace. The several Courts of Justice were so badly off for accommodation that the best private houses available in the town had to be rented to locate them. The palace itself was very much in need of repair and renovation. The college building with its lateral additions and a large shed had become insufficient to accommodate the growing strength and had no breathing space, no grounds for recreation. The girls' school was in a low, dingy private dwelling-house. The scanty dimensions of the Hospital left little provision for in-patients, surgery and post-mortem dissection.

To supply these wants Sashiah Sastri proposed the construction of a pile of buildings, a little outside the town, in airy situation. For the satisfactory execution of these special works he engaged the services of an experienced Engineer—Mr. Wilks, M.I.C.E. To avoid the risk generally attending contract works it was resolved to prepare on the spot and by direct agency such materials as bricks and chunam. The preparation of these materials and the getting down of iron



rails, steel-girders and joists from Madras and Bombay took up some time and it was only in 1888-89 that a fair start was made. The works progressed well and all the buildings, including the Residency, a bungalow for the Rajah, and public offices for two of the taluks, were one after another brought to completion in a few years. They are some of the finest buildings to be seen in these parts and are, in the words of Sir Henry Bliss, permanent memorials of Sashiah Sastri's tenure of power.

The roads of the state, even the main lines to Tanjore, and Trichy and Madura, were hardly traversable in parts during the rainy season. Their condition was a byword and during the rains they used to be strewn with wrecks of broken down carts. The main roads were remetalled, fully provided with tunnels and put and maintained in thorough order. Several new roads were opened, radiating in every direction from the capital to the limits of the state and connecting the town and all important places in and outside the state. All the roads were kept in excellent order under the mile-coolie system. In fact, one of the first things to attract the admiration of visitors to the state was the remarkable excellence of the roads. Mr. James Andrew, one of the Political Agents, observes :—



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

“The roads, so far as I have seen them, are excellent, the best I have seen in India and the Dewan-Regent may well be proud of them.”

And the Dewan-Regent was proud of them.

Not to speak of the convenience to the public, the facility of communication secured by such a fine net-work of roads has given an extraordinary impetus to trade and agricultural prosperity, converted the town of Pudukota into an emporium, and made the weekly fair in the town one of the largest institutions of its kind in Southern India, one of the busiest centres of traffic between the alluvial districts of the Kâveri on the north and the wealthy Nattukottai country on the south.

In concluding the Special Report* on D.P.W. to the Political Agent in 1893, Sashiah Sastri wrote :—

“I trust it will show that nothing has been done without system or without forethought in the past. The bird's-eye-view which I have taken above will show what a wide field remains for the future if the various wants and improvements are steadily kept in view and systematically carried out. No beneficent ruler can make better gifts to his subjects in return for the taxes than buildings so necessary for administrative purposes, roads so necessary for the carrying of produce to profitable markets, irrigation works so vital for the revenue and to agricultural prosperity

* Special Report on D.P.W. to the Political Agent, April 1893.



and drinking water ponds so necessary for man and beast in a dry rainfed country with so uncertain fall of rain."

These are noble words nobly spoken and for the most part even more nobly translated into deeds. 'One could scarce help wishing that Providence had given him health and strength to continue in harness till he should have completed the programme of irrigation improvements, the only material part of the programme that was left incomplete through causes already referred to, which, if completed, would have crowned the edifice of his Public Works policy.

No less remarkable than the remarkably splendid condition of the roads was the change that came over the capital of the Raj. The drinking and bathing tanks and ponds so conveniently scattered over the town and suburbs had been long neglected and during the rains the water in them was muddy and dirty and in the hot weather became filthy and pestilential. The guinea-worm, a dreadful disease, came every year with the summer and visited almost every other house in the town and was a source of endless suffering to the people. In one of his earlier Reports Sashiah Sastri writes :—

"The guinea-worm for which the place has a notoriety was very prevalent at the capital during the hottest months of the year. Both in number and virulence the attack of



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

the year was uncommonly severe, hardly a household escaping. It is a disease which spares neither age nor sex nor caste nor profession and which continues to baffle the efforts of medical men."

Sir Madhava Rao had written to Sashiah Sastri in 1883 :—

"Guinea-worm seems to be the everlasting curse of Pudukota. It is all due to bad water. Would you not immortalise your administration by giving your capital a good wholesome supply of water?"

In another letter Sir Madhava Rao wrote :—

"The great thing is to place within easy reach of the inhabitants good water at least for drinking and cooking.... If you can succeed in this this alone will perpetuate the memory of your connection with the state."

Sashiah Sastri waited for a favourable time to set to work. The season of 1883-84 was the driest known for a long time and the tanks were, most of them, dried up to the bed. Advantage was taken of this opportunity and the tanks were taken up, one after another, and in a year or two almost all of them were cleared out and renovated. The one in the centre of the town known as the Pallavankolam, that had been left to itself for over half a century, was completely cleared, the old bathing ghauts were repaired, new ones were added with flights of granite steps, a strong parapet wall was erected all round so as to prevent any water from the neighbouring streets.



finding its way into it as it used to do, and a *merali mantap* raised in the centre of the tank served the needs of the annual floating festival in the adjoining temple and greatly added to the artistic effect of the scenery around.

Then came the turn of the other tanks in the town. The slush and silt of years were removed, the tanks were deepened and put in thorough order and the bunds were levelled and turfed. The feeding channels were also attended to and the necessary precautions were taken to secure them from pollution. A set of rules were drawn up for the conservancy of the tanks, some of them being set apart for drinking purposes alone, others for bathing and others again for washing. Watchmen were appointed to enforce the rules under the instructions of a special officer. 'Sashiah Sastri had more faith in 'the master's eye' than in any number of codes and once a week he regularly drove out to all parts of the town noting everything with the keen eye which nothing escaped and laying in his mind the germs of many a reform, which were in the fulness of time to grow and fructify to the benefit of the people.

Writing to a friend on the 17th July 1883, Sashiah Sastri says :—

“ Mr. Sewell has written to express satisfaction with all



he saw and experienced during his visit and to say that my newly-metalled Tanjore road was found to be 'extremely good.' As he had to use a palanquin two years ago on the same road he is the best man to appreciate the change. I have now taken to deepening and clearing the public ponds of the town, on which not a rupee has been spent within the memory of the oldest man living. There is scarcely a morning I don't drive out to see the progress and suggest improvements as the works progress. With a treasury containing six lacs at my back I now feel that I can indulge myself to the fullest extent in the luxury of doing public good—But I am forgetting myself and drifting into 'Vanity Fair.'"

A little more than a year after this, he writes to the same friend :—

"The town tanks, of which I am rather proud, are looking their best now—full to the brim—and present to view magnificent sheets of water—from each of which the surplus escapes over the new kalinguls with a rush and roar, which make them look like miniature waterfalls."

One marked result of these improvements was the disappearance of the guinea-worm from the town. *Apropos* of this Sashiah Sastri observes in 1886 :—

"Even a successive couple of years may be insufficient time to found a theory on. But if the experience of the next few years confirms the opinion recorded by the Medical Officer and it comes to pass in course of time that the guinea-worm which has been the curse of Pudukota town has been stamped out by the improved water-supply. I should congratulate myself very much on such a happy result."



The disease died out and those who year after year bore the badge of the curse have come to breathe free and think of the return of summer without a shudder.

In 1890 the rains failed and a large tank—called the Pudukkolam—almost ran dry. Prices rose high, labour was abundant and some kind of relief work on a large scale seemed very desirable and it struck Sashiah Sastri that in these circumstances he could not do better than improve and enlarge this tank and convert it into a large reservoir capable of containing several years' supply and placing the town beyond the reach of a drought. The project was immediately undertaken. Labourers were called out from the taluks. From three to four thousands were at the work every day for near a fortnight, the highest on record being seven thousand on a day. After a few days, the remaining work was left to be done steadily in the ordinary way. The work was brought to completion before Sashiah Sastri retired. It is a magnificent sheet of fresh wholesome water of which the town may well feel proud.

Though the town had been originally well laid out, the streets and lanes had been extensively encroached upon and the drainage had become so obstructed that the drains became almost bogs



during the rains. The weekly fair in the town was being held along the public thoroughfare and on its sides and obstructed all traffic. It was an unsheltered spot and exposed the assembled thousands to the inclemencies of the weather. The Paracheri—the dwelling of the Pariah population—situated in the closest contiguity to the town was a great nuisance. The removal and disposal of the dead bodies of animals, which were among the duties of the Pariahs, the impure habits of this section of the people, the extreme narrowness of the lanes and paths of the Paracheri and its inaccessibility to scavenging carts rendered this part of the town conspicuously liable to cholera and small-pox, which not only first visited this part and left it last but often spread thence into the town and caused heavy mortality.

The houses which obstructed the roads and lanes of the town were pulled down, liberal compensation being given to the owners. Narrow lanes were broadened; new roads were opened where needed and the thickest parts of the town were rendered more airy. To give new sites to those whose houses had been pulled down and to afford increased building space for the growing population of the town suburbs were formed at



the ends of the town and laid out in broad regular streets.

The weekly fair was removed to a spacious Tope, which had three tanks within calling distance, with a good supply of drinking water to man and beast ; and long ranges of sheds were run up to afford, along with the trees in Tope, sufficient shelter from the weather.

The hamlets where the Pariahs and the Pallars lived huddled up in small spaces in little huts, which were no better than pigsties, were demolished, and in their stead, spacious grounds, a little removed from the town, were allotted and laid out in regular neatly laid out streets with a common square in the centre and plenty of space outside in every direction as commons ; and the habitations of these, the disinherited of the earth, became a little less of the hovel and a little more of the home.

The prickly-pear, a noxious plant, left to itself for half a century and grown to enormous proportions, threatened to swallow up whole villages in the taluks and had even encroached on the environs of the town. Venomous reptiles found shelter under the shrub and hardly a year elapsed without deaths of men and cattle from snake bite. A vigorous campaign was



undertaken for the extirpation of this pernicious plant and was carried on with great success. A small part of the work, nearest to the town, was done by paid agency, but the greater portion all along the main roads and in the taluks was done by the gratuitous labour of the people who cheerfully responded to the call.

Lamp-posts were set up and the public streets and roads were lighted, and as the town expanded the lighting was extended to the new suburbs.

These, each by itself, are perhaps small things ; but they constantly demanded his personal attention and took up a considerable portion of his time and the officers employed in such work had to be stimulated into enthusiasm and sustained effort by timely words of encouragement and praise. The result was gratifying beyond measure—especially the comfort and ray of sunshine which some of these measures brought to the most neglected sections of the community.

A large palace garden in the town, called the Ananda Bagh, which through long neglect had fallen from its once flourishing condition and lost all traces of its splendour, was renovated and improved in a style not unworthy of its name and its traditions. It added to the attractions of the town and furnished to the



people an easy means of healthy recreation and innocent enjoyment.

These improvements as well as the magnificent edifices raised for the accommodation of the several offices have made the town one of the most attractive places in Southern India. As Sashiah Sastri observes in one of his Administration Reports :—

“ People who have known the town well ten years ago can hardly recognise it now. New suburbs, new streets, new lanes added to new streets and new tanks, and old tanks so improved as not to be easily recognised, all kept in perfect order and cleanliness and all lighted without stint in the dark hours meet them at every turn and confound them for the nonce.”

Lacs of rupees, a great part of the savings of the state, were spent on these improvements, the buildings and the tanks. The utility of these works and the effective appearance they gave to the town were indeed gratifying to Sashiah Sastri ; but even more gratifying was the thought that most of the money spent went to the poor workmen—almost all of them natives of the state.

Arrangements were also made for the sanitation, lighting and conservancy of tanks of the more important and populous towns and villages in the interior and their periodical inspection by the Chief Sanitary Officer.

A British post office combined with the Tele-



graph was opened at Pudukota, and some years later, under negotiations with the Madras Government, the state postal department was handed over to the Imperial Post. Sir Henry Stokes, writing to Sashiah Sastri in January 1884, says :—

“I was exceedingly glad to learn that you are getting so civilised in Pudukota as to have a post office. You are really getting on!”

Pudukota must have appeared to Sir Henry to be a Rip Wan Winkle just awakened from the slumber of ages. The spell was broken by Sashiah Sastri and in some respects the state has come to march ahead of its plodding neighbours.

The hospital in the town, placed under efficient control, and officered by qualified and capable assistants, became increasingly useful and popular; and it was located in a splendid building which, in point of spacious and airy accommodation and general arrangements, is equipped in almost princely style. Dispensaries were opened in the Firka stations which are not within easy reach of the medical aid at the capital.

When Sashiah Sastri came into office there were, except two regulations of recent date, no written laws in the state. Their absence often left the people and the authorities in the dark as to what the law of the state really was. The



British laws and regulations were taken as their guides by the Courts and the officers and their provisions freely administered without even a royal warrant authorising such a course. A beginning was made in 1880 and as necessity arose new regulations were made and published in the State Gazette, all more or less modelled on British lines with such changes as the requirements of state rendered desirable.

A long, irregular and circuitous line of boundary touching the three surrounding British Districts had given rise to many disputes, leading now and then to breach of peace between the villagers concerned and irritation between the British officers and those of the state. A special officer was deputed to represent the interests of the state, and certain differences having arisen in the course of the settlement Sashiah Sastri and the Political Agent went out to inspect the places and came to an amicable settlement with the British officer appointed for the purpose. The settlement was brought to a satisfactory conclusion in a few years.

Dacoities and highway robberies, crimes attended with grievous hurt and violence and murder had been, before Sashiah Sastri's time, of frequent occurrence throughout the state. Cattle-lifting and sheep-stealing were very com-



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

mon. Theft and robbery were hereditarily the profession of a large section of the people in the state. The feeling of clanship is strong in them and almost ineradicable. Even women and children inherit the spirit and try their best to screen the offenders. The habitat of these clans is neither exclusively within the limits of the state nor without but lies in a zone comprising the frontiers of the state and those of the three surrounding British Districts. In 1885 the India Government proposed to discontinue the arrangement by which the British Government allowed the Superintendent of Police, Trichinopoly, to superintend the state police till it should grow strong and equal to its work, but at Sashiah Sastri's pressing request the arrangement was continued in the interests of the state and the surrounding districts. Notorious dacoits were hunted down and most of them were convicted and imprisoned. The roads became perfectly safe and security and peace reigned everywhere within the state. What contributed most towards this happy result was the magic of Sashiah Sastri's name, which was a terror to all evil-doers. "The gods themselves could be managed with tact,—but Sashiah Sastri—!" So long as the destinies of Pudukota were in his hands, this feeling dominated all others in the



minds of the people and influenced all their actions. It was a strong personality hypnotising and controlling a host of lesser minds; and the awe inspired was wholesome though a trifle stifling.

His prison administration was an embodiment of justice tempered by humanity. The old prison-house which was extremely insanitary gave place to a commodious and airy building satisfying all hygienic conditions. The convicts were fed on a liberal scale of diet and their health was carefully looked after. They were chiefly employed in the conservancy of the town and the repair of town roads and some few in in-door labour such as rope-making, basket-making, &c. His system was calculated to foster a sense of self-respect in the lapsed and fallen, an effectual extinguisher of criminal tendencies; for in the course of his sixteen years' administration the number of convicts fell from 150 on an average to about 100.

No department of the state underwent so many changes in his time as the judicial machinery. At first there were a few Munsiff's Courts, a Civil and Sessions Court at the capital and an Appeal Court. One of the Munsiff's Courts was abolished as it was without sufficient work. Appellate jurisdiction over the Munsiff's Courts



was transferred from the Rajah's Court of Appeal to the Civil Court. The Civil Judge's place having fallen vacant, a qualified officer was brought in from the British service. Under the new Civil Judge all arrears were cleared off. He was a very energetic and capable officer and raised the tone of the Court to a pitch it had not known before. But there was a fatality about the Court. The judge whose attainments and character would have adorned any service died in a few years; his successor who was a no less happy choice died an equally premature death.

In the highest Court of Appeal the ruler himself sat *in propria persona*, the Dewan was an *ex-officio* judge and there was a judicial officer called the Appeal Judge. A Court of Judicature in which the ruler and the head of the executive were *ex-officio* judges and formed a standing majority against a single professional judge was an anachronism, which demanded a re-organisation of the judicial machinery. A scheme was drawn up by the Civil Judge. Based on this and on the constitution of analogous courts in other native states, a Chief Court consisting of three judges and independent of the executive was brought into existence in January 1887. After some experience it was found that the work turned out by the Court was much too little for its strength;



it was however out of the question to reduce the number of judges and bring the Dewan again into the Appeal Court, the very object of the new re-adjustment having been to eliminate the executive element from the judicial system. To give sufficient work to the judges the two existing Munsiff's Courts had to be abolished ; with this additional work thrown upon them the judges had a pretty fair share of work.

But the scheme did not work satisfactorily. When the new Chief Court first came into being, an outsider from the Tanjore Bar, a pleader of 16 years' standing, a gentleman for whom Sashiah Sastri had a high regard and attachment, was brought in as Chief Judge ; and the judge of the late Civil and Sessions Court was placed under him as the second judge. The second judge naturally felt that his claims had not been adequately recognised ; nor was the conduct of the Chief Judge such as to conciliate the ruffled feelings of a superseded colleague. Sashiah Sastri with a natural delicacy of feeling trusted to the healing influence of time. But the friction gathered strength with time. Party spirit and embittered feelings fomented by the intrigues of interested agitators brought matters to a crisis, which necessitated the removal of the Chief Judge whose " conduct and attitude towards his

X Annaswami Sastri



colleagues and reckless setting at naught the provisions of Procedure Law had brought on all the scandal and the troubles and the deadlock in the working of the Court.”*

Early in his administration Sashiah Sastri passed a Regulation authorising the levy of fees in the Courts of Civil Judicature. As he remarks in one of his Administration Reports :—

“The object was less to secure additional revenue to the state than to check in some degree vexatious litigation. I was satisfied from enquiry that the introduction of fees in our Courts would have certainly the latter effect and would not on the other hand press on the people who were hitherto accustomed to sue in our Courts without payment of an institution fee.... A considerable percentage of the suits of larger values springs from the Nattukkottai Chetties and there seemed little objection in bringing them under the incidence of legal taxation ; especially so, in cases between one Chetty and another, arising out of their transactions abroad and beyond the state of Pudukota.... This measure has had already a wholesome effect in curtailing vexatious litigation to a remarkable extent—besides financially promising to yield a revenue enough to meet the cost of the Courts.”

The cause of higher education in the state throve wonderfully under Sashiah Sastri’s fostering and discriminating care. What was in 1878 a Lower Secondary School with a strength of about 70 students grew in a few years into a brilliant

* From a demi-official letter of Sashiah Sastri to the Political Agent.



second-grade college nearly 700 strong. Graduates who had won honours in their academical course were secured for the College staff. The results of the University and public examinations were uniformly creditable and sometimes even brilliant and spread the name of the College far and wide and began to attract students from outside. The school house built in 1879 and added to from time to time to meet the growing strength became at length irreparably short of accommodation. In 1891 the College except the Primary Department removed to the present site. Airy and spacious, the College is an imposing edifice with a fine library, an extensive compound and an equally extensive recreation ground with provision for tennis, badminton, cricket and football. Most of the students that pass through the College course find employment in the several departments of the state.

The Dewan was gratified by the splendid results of the institution and even wished, at one time, 'to crown the educational edifice' by raising it to the status of a first-grade college. But primary education was getting to be the talk of the day, and the Political Agent was of opinion that, instead of crowning the educational edifice, it would be better to deepen and broaden the foundations. Sashiah Sastri's view was that



primary education was well enough as it was and better adapted to the needs of the people than the new system with its codes, its new methods, its inspectors and inspecting school-masters. As he writes in one of his Reports :—

“There is no well-to-do middle class among the resident agricultural population of the state. All are more or less only a few degrees removed from poverty and want their children to be at the plough or with their cattle instead of learning lessons in Geography and History in the new fashion schools. To such as care for a knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic to the extent they want, the pial schools are at hand and furnish at a very cheap rate and at home the necessary training in a couple of years or so. Taluk or village schools on the modern plan and with modern text-books and modern method and course of instruction have no chance with a population so situated and I almost think it a pity to endeavour to draw away the boys from their wonted hereditary career of practical usefulness, for the purpose of learning to write on paper which they do not want or learning to cast sums on black-board and slate, while the pial schools teach them to do it mentally. A system of grants-in-aid to the masters of pial schools, on the condition of their introducing and teaching a few simple text-books on Geography and History, it strikes me, would suit the existing condition better and it is my intention to work out such a system tentatively in a few large villages....”

To secure this object a few rules for grants-in-aid were published in 1885, and an inspecting staff was appointed to inspect and report on such pial schools as might become eligible for grants.



A few schools were maintained under salary system. In 1885 there [were only 13 schools that could get the grants. In 1894 there were 219 such schools.

A girls' school was opened in 1883 with 13 girls on the rolls. A course of studies was framed suited to the requirements of Hindu girls. The Dewan took great interest in the growth of the school, and it expanded in strength and usefulness; and the school was housed in a commodious and attractive building erected in the centre of the town.

Sashiah Sastri's management of the state charities and religious institutions was marked by discrimination and enlightened liberality. The state pagoda at Tirugokarnam, a suburb of the town, was improved; the sacred tank attached to it was cleared of its rocky projections and impediments; ornaments in gold set with precious stones and wagons in silver plate were made for the use of the shrine. Similar improvements were effected in all the temples of the state and the family shrine at the palace.

The Dussrah festival which comes off every September is celebrated in the state on a grand scale. Thousands of poor Brahmans flock to the town from the surrounding districts and are fed — by the state for the ten days and besides receive



every day a dole of one measure of rice and four tiny copper coins and on the concluding day of the festival a two-anna silver coin. This last, the most important distribution, attracts the largest number of donees among whom are thousands of women and children. It was, at one time, made on the night of the last day and was attended with great inconvenience to the people. Sashiah Sastri removed this and several other defects in the management of this annual celebration.

One noteworthy feature of the Dussrah institution of the state is the holding of examinations in the several branches of Sanskrit learning and the giving of money rewards to all those who pass the examinations. These examinations were reduced to a system; grades were instituted in the several branches, a suitable curriculum of subjects was prescribed for the several grades, as also a proportionate scale of rewards. Tickets were issued to the successful candidates—tickets which were welcomed as hall-marks of scholarship and which entitled the recipients to the rewards year after year. On the closing day a convocation was held under the presidency of the Dewan, learned discussions were held by the Pandits assembled, who vied with one another for intellectual supremacy. Competitions in extempore versifying gave a zest to the animated



scene of intellectual combat and the successful competitors came in for praise and applause, the memory of the glories achieved keeping alive their flame for further victories and egging on the rest to sustained exertion and laborious days and better success next time. The Dewan, whose sympathy with the Pandits has been more than once referred to, threw himself with a genuine ardour into these proceedings and made the institution a living force in the land for the revival and spread of a learning whose decline he has ever viewed with sincere regret. As he writes in one of his letters to the present ruler of Travancore :—

“Fame rides on the wings of *Sarasvati*. Money spent in the revival and promotion of *our* national literature which is the noblest and oldest intellectual legacy in the world will not be money thrown away.”

During the festival the streets and pials of the town rang with the echoes of Vedic chants and learned disquisitions, the very air was fragrant with the aroma of classic learning and the town, with its throng of well-read, and for the time well-fed, Pandits assembled from many parts of Southern India brings to one's mind the palmiest days of ancient Greece and her Olympic celebrations.

A few political events that occurred during



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

his regime might be mentioned here. Among these was the resumption of the Western Palace Jaghire. This estate had almost entirely passed into the usufructuary possession of creditors. The Jaghirdar was in sore straits and appealed to the Madras Government for relief. The matter was referred to Sashiah Sastri who went into the question of the tenure of the estate and found that the estate was inalienable by sale, gift or mortgage; and under the advice of the Madras Government the Jaghire was absolutely resumed in 1881 and a money pension was granted to the family upon such conditions as would ensure to every member of the family his share of the benefit of the arrangement. Liberal provisions were also made to meet reasonable extraordinary expenses.

The Hon. D. F. Carmichael, writing to Sashiah Sastri of this, says :—

“ I see you have happily settled the *Mel aramanai*. I set that stone rolling.”

The Chinnaramanai Jaghirdar, the late Rajah's brother's son, being a minor, his estate came under the management of the state. Its revenues were improved. Suitable arrangements were made for the education of the minor in the Presidency College at Madras. The Jaghirdar came of age in 1884, but at his special request the

Chinnaramanai
Rajah



management of the estate was continued for about two years more and the estate was handed over to him in August 1886 with a balance of two lacs of rupees in cash and Government securities.

Great improvements were made in the style of the carriages and horses belonging to the palace. The company of sepoy known as the battalion and the handful of troopers, who had been ill-paid, ill-clothed and ill-armed, were equipped in a fitting manner and trained by efficient officers. Some of the more valuable pieces of jewellery which formed the regalia of the Raj and which had been pledged by the late Rajah were redeemed. Certain jewels which had long been lying with Messrs. Orr and Sons for want of a suitable offer were sold outright in 1881; and the money realised by the sale was utilised for a last *pro rata* payment to the creditors of the Rajah.

One of the creditors appealed in 1889 to the late Mr. Charles Bradlaugh, M.P., to bring his claims before Parliament. Mr. William Digby, before advising Mr. Bradlaugh to take up the question, wrote to Sashiah Sastri if the subject could be reconsidered. The following extract from Sashiah Sastri's reply may be quoted here :—

“ There being no more assets available from the sale of



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

the regalia and other jewels which were declared *personal effects* and which were alone declared liable to the *personal* debts of the late Rajah, further payment ceased. This was the course pursued not with this person only but with a hundred other creditors. The late Rajah was very extravagant and borrowed largely caring very little about repayment. The Madras Government interfered and settled his debts twice or thrice, each time warning both the Rajah and the creditors that they (Government) will not undertake to settle future debts. But the Rajah continued to borrow so long as there were speculative people to lend and there had sprung up a class of unscrupulous and even fictitious creditors who speculated at great risk taking up the Promissory notes of the Rajah and discounting them at 75 or even 90 per cent. of the nominal debt and taking their chance of a liquidation by the Political Agent out of the surplus funds of the state whenever they accumulated. The Government found out at last that the more they interfered the more the bonds sprang into existence with the rapidity of mushrooms. So they gave notice that the state surplus would no longer be liable to the payment of the Rajah's debts. Thenceforward prosperity dawned upon Pudukota....The surplus revenues of the state were thenceforward applied to their legitimate purposes—such as improvement of the Courts and Revenue establishments, improvement of the Police, construction of Roads and Irrigation works, establishment of schools and Hospitals, sanitation and conservancy. Learning from my published Administration Reports that I have laid by some lacs of rupees out of the surplus of the state under my administration—as a provision for a wintry day which is most necessary in a country which often suffers from failure or scantiness of rains, these old creditors appeared on the scene



and demanded payment of the *balance* of their dues as per registered schedule of the last liquidation. I of course referred them to the decision of Government, which was distinct and final and I declined to reopen the subject. The action of the Madras Government had been every time fully endorsed by the Court of Directors and by the Secretary of State. All this had taken place long before my advent in the state and so my personal connection in the matter is nil and I shall be an unconcerned spectator if ever the subject is brought before Parliament.....”

Mr. William Digby wrote in reply :—

“.....I am satisfied from the particulars you give that—has no claim upon the state....; and under the circumstances I shall write to tell him that I am not prepared to ask any member of Parliament to bring his case before the House of Commons.....

And now, my dear friend, I conclude by hoping you may have as long a life as Mr. Gladstone, that you may celebrate your 80th birthday twenty years hence, and that it may be my pleasure to congratulate you then on having attained to so good an old age. I am satisfied that so long as you live Southern India will receive the benefit of your life, experience and judgment and that that part of the great Empire of India will be the better for your continued efforts.”

These are but samples of the action which has been taken by Sashiah Sastri all along the line. It would be long to narrate all that he did during the sixteen years he stayed at Pudukota, the life he put into the machinery of the state down to the tiniest screw, the all-penetrating pre-vision with which he made all his



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

arrangements, from the supply of cradles for the comfort of travellers with young children, who might halt on the wayside Chuttrums, up to the enunciation and carrying out of the highest principles of statecraft.

He succeeded in all he undertook; but his successes were often won against heavy odds. His all-canopying personality had cast into the shadow those who had enjoyed almost unbounded influence and power and created for him enemies in high circles; and when the time came for fight he stood his ground boldly and cared not to hide his iron hand under velvet gloves. He was at once the envy and despair of his opponents. The more difficulties there were, the more pleased he seemed to be. His spirit rose with obstacles and he was never so sure to excel himself as when he was confronted with difficulties that would have crushed a weaker man.

His voluminous correspondence with the late Rajah and the Political Agents (a great part of which, being confidential, can never see the light of day) reads almost like romance and gives one some idea of the tough fight he had often to fight, the almost insuperable obstacles he had to overcome and the sturdy vigour with which he fought and won. And while the fighting was at the severest, he still had the same calm, imper-



turbable demeanour that ever he had, the same smile with which he received his visitors, the off-handness with which he threw himself into the conversation of the hour and delighted them with his flashes of wit and wisdom.

Within less than three years of his coming the opposition had gathered strength and an effort was made to remove him from office. His 'high crimes and misdemeanour' were carried to the Madras Government. Sashiah Sastri never feared for the result, but he was sick of all this. Writing to a very intimate friend about this time, he says:—

"A grand effort is now being made to bring about a change in the administration. I wish them success with all my heart!....."

My mind is, I confess, ill at ease. My position here is getting more and more unpleasant to my feelings and I long to be out of it....If I care I might stay as long I please; but the question is—Is it worth while?...."

As Sashiah Sastri writes in one of his letters:—

"Little *contre-temps* ought not to disturb the equanimity of a well-controlled philosophic mind; but they *do* when they happen."

His relations with the Rajah, though generally smooth, became sometimes unpleasant. An extract or two from his letters to the Rajah may not be out of place as showing the principle on which he acted:—



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

"It would not be truth to say I did not feel very much the expressions of displeasure during the audience I had on Saturday last. I am therefore quite satisfied by the perusal of your Highness' very kind and gracious note now acknowledged. In the course of my duty and according to the dictates of my conscience I have sometimes to do things which are very unpleasant to myself and still more so to your Highness. But I have always confidence that when the first effects of disappointment and anger pass away your Highness will judge of my motives and acts in their proper light. I am therefore glad to find that on this occasion also I have been forgiven."

In another letter he says :—

"Your Highness feelingly alludes to your Highness' declining health and advancing years and a consequent desire not to be troubled with changes during the remainder of your life. In the matter of declining health and advancing years I am in the same boat with your Highness. In fact I am worse and older. For that very reason both your Highness and myself should endeavour to do the maximum of good which may be possible within the short term of life which may be allotted to us."

In 1884 Sashiah Sastri succeeded by his representations in securing for the Rajah the honour of the 'Salute' of which he had been deprived and the title of Highness.

The following extracts from his letter to the Political Agent on the subject deserve quotation :

"You are aware that the honour of a "Royal Salute" is still withheld from His Excellency the Rajah of Pudukota though the title of "His Excellency" was restored to him



on the occasion of His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh's visit to Madras in 1870....

The withholding of honours was a mark of displeasure on the part of Government on account of personal extravagant habits and neglect of administration.

You are aware that in order to set himself right in the estimation of the Madras Government by carrying out the much needed numerous reforms in the administration, His Excellency, acting under advice of Government, removed the old Sirkele (minister) and appointed me to that office in August 1878.

What success has since attended the administration of the state, it scarcely becomes me to dilate on. The Administration Reports of the last four years contain a narrative of the reforms effected in every direction and of its general efficiency and improved tone....

At the present day, justice, civil and criminal, is being administered with the least possible delay. The revenues are being collected with the greatest punctuality and without oppression. While economy is studied on the one hand, a much greater proportion of the revenues is now devoted to works of public utility and works of remunerative character sustaining the revenues of the state, than was the case at any time in the previous history of the state. All extravagant expenditure has been rigorously curtailed and every item of expenditure brought under effectual check. Within this period, there has not been a single complaint of oppression or injustice taken to the Political Agent or the Government of Madras by any of the subjects of His Excellency the Rajah—a circumstance which must contrast very favourably when the past state of things is recalled to mind. In all these respects, Pudukota of to-day can fairly



hold up its head among the well-governed native states of India.

The work of reform is not yet quite complete; but every thing is in train to complete it; and before long, all will have been done, which is necessary to put the administration on sound and solid foundations.

That all this could not have taken place without the cordial support of His Excellency the Rajah may naturally be taken for granted and, as a matter of fact, he denied to me no support—at any rate during the first years of the administration when it was most needed.

His Excellency, under these circumstances, trusts that the Government will be pleased to consider whether the time has not arrived for judging whether the administration of the state has not improved to such a degree as to remove the original cause of its displeasure and to justify the restoration to him of the honours taken away under that displeasure.....

His Excellency feels that old age is coming on, and is therefore most anxious, before it is too late, to retrieve the past and to bequeath, unabated, to his son and heir, what he inherited from his forefathers.....

That the Tondiman threw himself boldly into the British cause from the earliest times and served their interests with unswerving fidelity, amidst surrounding and imminent danger of vengeance from his lawless neighbours—that he was a friend in times of distress—that he never even once failed to render help when required, by counsel, by troops, and by supplies of provisions, as well as fighting side by side with the soldiers of the Honourable Company—and by so doing he saved much effusion of blood and helped materially to the restoration of order and tranquillity in the southernmost and most troublesome provinces of the Presidency—are facts,



which, the Rajah feels sure, have been strikingly illustrated, and generously acknowledged by those illustrious warriors, such as Clive, Coote and Lawrence whose names adorn history and whose genius built up the British power in Southern India. His Excellency makes bold to say that Indian history could point to few allies who, in times of sore need, were ever ready to render and rendered the utmost help in their power, regardless of their own safety.....

The Rajah, under the blessings of God and under the auspices of Her Majesty the Empress, exercises the full powers of a Sovereign Ruler over an area of 1,380 square miles and a population of 300,000 subjects and conducts his administration under precisely the same laws as are in force in British India. Taking into consideration the portions of revenues alienated for different purposes, such as Military chiefs and the militia, the gross revenue of the state is not far from (Rs. 10,00,000) ten lacs of rupees. But the mere circumstance of the comparative smallness of the state cannot, His Excellency trusts, be held as an argument for abating honours already and deservedly enjoyed and justly due to royal personages.....

The Rajah therefore trusts that his request as to the address of 'Highness' and 'Maharajah' may be deemed not unreasonable and not unworthy of being complied with; and that by such gracious compliance he may be enabled to transmit to his posterity not merely honours and titles he inherited from his forefathers but something more as the reward of good administration.

In making bold to prefer this request the Rajah is not unalive to a feeling of regret that his past career should have been such as to have called forth the displeasure of Government.

Coming to the throne at the early age of 10, and surrounded



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

by flatterers and companions of youth, only too prone to mislead, it was His Excellency's misfortune to run into extravagance and debt and to experience the inevitable consequences.

But he would now assure Government that it will be his study for the future, as it has been during the recent past, to bring the administration of his state to the highest pitch of perfection which the resources of the state and the help of wise ministers at his command would permit.

Marks of approbation, such as those now solicited, are powerful incentives to unfailing loyalty and attachment and to good administration; and the Rajah humbly hopes, whether with reference to the unshaken fidelity of the House, in old times, or with reference to the greatly improved administration introduced in recent years, that those marks of approbation will not be deemed ill-deserved by the Tondiman family, whom history has described as one of "the *oldest* and *truest* allies of the British in Southern India."

In conclusion, I sincerely trust that with the deep interest which you have taken in the welfare of the state, during a considerable period, and with your perfect knowledge of the improvements which have been made in the administration under your wise guidance, you will be able to support all the recommendations I have made above. For my part, I hope and believe that the restoration of honours taken away and the grant of new ones will not make His Excellency the Rajah forget the past or neglect the future, for he now knows that "all honours" are based on, and inseparable from, good administration."

Two letters, in connection with this subject, may be found interesting. One is from Sir Madhava Rao to Sashiah Sastri :—

"Yours of the 30th to hand. Many thanks for the news



it contains about *His Highness* of Pudukota. Your connexion with that state has been signalized in a remarkable manner. His Highness has much reason to be gratified, both on his own account and on account of his state. In short, the position of Pudukota has been markedly improved. It is now higher and more honourable than *ever* before. On this result I cordially congratulate you. I feel sure that such a result could not have been effected by any other minister."

The other is from Mr. D. F. Carmichael, who had known Pudukota in its worst days, to the Rajah :—

"I was very happy to learn from your letter that the Queen-Empress of India had been pleased to confer a hereditary salute of eleven guns on the chief of the loyal old State of Pudukota and that the title of 'Highness' had also been conceded.

Your esteemed Dewan, Sashiah Sastri, who writes to me occasionally informs me that he is carrying out under your auspices, numerous beneficial reforms in the administration.

Let us hope that the dark and evil days of Pudukota are now over. When we look back a few years you cannot be too thankful for the high honour and credit which now attach to "Tondiman" and his country."

The late Rajah died in April 1886. Sashiah Sastri was made Dewan-Regent and continued in this exalted position till the present ruler came of age and assumed the reins of government in November 1894.



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

The regency was not brought about without strong opposition. It was represented to the Government of India that, during the minority, the administration might be entrusted to a resident English Superintendent. The Madras Government, however, were strongly for Sashiah Sastri's regency, and the Supreme Government deferred to their opinion.

Sashiah Sastri, writing of this to an intimate friend, says :—

“ You will be glad to learn that the regency is no longer in suspense. Well, it is a queer position. There is nothing but prickly pear all round in the direction of the palace. But I believe I have the people with me. It is after all the hand of Providence that invisibly, though none the less certainly, guides us and controls our own destinies and the destinies of Native States and of all kingdoms on earth.

I don't myself feel anything like my friends in the matter. It has, for one thing, rather increased the anxieties of my position. As to the high sounding title I am almost tempted to ask, what is in a name ? ”

His friend Sir Madhava Rao wrote to Sashiah Sastri :—

“ Let me congratulate you most warmly on your attainment of the high and honourable position you now occupy.

When we used to meet in our early years and eat our tiffin together, little did we dream that we were destined to become such eminent men !! God be praised for the great



good fortune which has attended us. May you long, long enjoy good health *plus* your position.

No doubt you will still have difficulties, but these will not be too much for your uncommon tact and judgment."

Suitable arrangements were made for the proper bringing up of the minor Rajah. Writing to Mr. William Digby in December 1889, Sashiah Sastri thus speaks of the progress of his ward :—

"..... My old Rajah died in 1886 (April 15) leaving an adopted son (otherwise grandson by his daughter) for the succession and a clear field for me to finish off the various reforms and numerous improvements which had been started and were in various stages of progress. A week hence the young Rajah will be entering on his 15th year. His progress in his studies has been so far very remarkable. He rides and drives well. He is excellent at Tennis. He has taken very kindly to Drawing, Carpentry and Photography as his indoor recreations and has shown great taste and aptitude. He moves with dignity and is ever cool and collected. He is blessed with an engaging countenance and a kindly harmless disposition. If all goes well, there is every reason to hope that six years hence the Pudukota State will be able to congratulate itself on the possession of a Ruler in no way inferior to the best of Native Rulers in India, in training, ability or character. It is very doubtful whether I shall live to see that day, but that does not diminish my earnestness to do all in my power to mould the character of the young Rajah."

Nobly and conscientiously indeed had Sashiah Sastri discharged his stewardship in the 16 years of his administration. The state, the fair state,



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

in the words of Lord Clive, 'of the illustrious family of the Tondiman,' the Tondiman family of whom Captain John Fyffe, Resident, writes in 1828: "In prosperity or adversity, from the earliest period of our connection with them, they have never failed us; neither considerations of danger nor allurements of advantage have ever induced them to swerve from their allegiance; and their services, sometimes in very critical conjunctures when we were struggling for Empire, have been eloquently recorded in the pages of history"—this state was bankrupt and sinking from chronic mismanagement when Sashiah Sastri was called to rescue it. Not by any fluke or windfall or stroke of good luck but by dint of sheer hard work, vigilance and perseverance and often in spite of much opposition had the state been "saved from imminent annexation," its ruler rescued from disgrace and restored to dignity and honour, the revenues more than doubled and every branch of the administration placed on a firm and efficient footing.

In November 1894 the Rajah was installed on the throne of his ancestors by the then Governor of Madras, Lord Wenlock, who thus referred to the services of Sashiah Sastri in his address to the Rajah:—



“.....The inheritance upon which you are this day entering was twenty years ago financially and in every other respect in a most dilapidated condition. The aspect of affairs is now very different; you will have made over to you a state not only unencumbered with debt but possessing a balance of between two and three lakhs, while there is every prospect of its yielding an increasing revenue if administered with due care. On every side material improvements are visible. Every branch of the administration has been more or less reformed, the revenue has improved, the roads are excellent, and the capital is adorned with modern public buildings. All these are due to the untiring energy and devotion to his duties of Dewan-Regent Mr. Sashiah Sastri, one of that talented body, the proficient of the High School, so many members of which have taken a prominent and honourable share in public affairs. Mr. Sashiah Sastri became Dewan in 1878, and after serving your grandfather until his demise in 1886, has since then continued to work for the well-being of the state of Pudukota with great ability and remarkable fidelity and honesty of purpose. The result of his labours has been so successful that what was at the time of his accession to office almost a wreck is at the present moment a prosperous possession. He is now, after a long and trying period of devotion to public service, laying aside official harness in view to enjoying a well-earned repose. I consider that Your Highness owes him a deep debt of gratitude and I am pleased to learn that you have decided to manifest your appreciation of the service done by him on his retirement in an appropriate manner.”

This chapter cannot better conclude than with the reply of Sashiah Sastri:—

“Your Excellency and Rajah,—I was not prepared for



A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

CSL

so handsome an allusion to my humble services rendered to the state—such as has appeared in Your Excellency's address. I had no idea that my services were to be referred to by Your Excellency in such flattering terms. I feel that I have only done my duty in having served the state as much as lay in my power. When I had retired almost from public business His Highness the late Rajah was good enough to invite me to take charge of the administration at a critical time, when matters connected with its affairs had come almost to a very low ebb. Under the blessings of God and the Madras Government, without whose support I would not have been able to do anything, things have prospered beyond all my expectation. I do fervently pray and join in fact with Your Excellency in praying, that the high education and excellent training which His Highness the Rajah has received under the directions of the Madras Government will bear good fruit in time, so that His Highness will far excel his predecessors in the excellent manner in which he holds his sway over his people. I am not much of a speaker, and the words that I now utter come not from my lips but from my heart, and those words must necessarily be few. I take this opportunity of thanking, through Your Excellency, the Madras Government, which has been so kind as to intrust me with the position which none of my fellows have attained—which position, I am happy to hear at this moment I have fulfilled in a manner satisfactory to Your Excellency's Government."



CHAPTER X.

OTIUM CUM DIGNITATE.

Some events of his private life, which took place during the 16 years of his Pudukota administration, must first find a record here. In April 1879 his only remaining brother died. Truly, as one of his friends, Dewan Bahadur Venkaswami Rao, writes to him on that occasion, 'no one has such tender affection for his relatives and no one has been put to so much affliction by deaths among them.' His heart has as often bled for the afflictions of his friends and he has felt them as his own. Could a letter show it, this one may :—

" Could it be true ? It came upon us like a thunderbolt on a fine summer's day. Was this her doom ?—She who was the best beloved and only child of our beloved brother ? How cruel and heartless of you—Ye Fates ? Is it to drink such bitter cups that life is prolonged ? Our poor sister-in-law ! Her life was miserable enough without this crowning-piece. That misery and repentance were mercy compared with what has now befallen. There is no consolation in such a case. We must bow down—bow down to the very dust—in all humility and resignation—before the awfully absolute Power of the great Almighty who keeps in his own hands the secret of Life and Death and orders our affairs in ways beyond our



CSL

A. SASHIAH SASTRI:

comprehension. Convey my sympathy to our poor sister-in-law and take courage yourself. As to unfortunate—my tongue is almost cold.”

The house he began to build for himself on the banks of the Kâveri, at Kumbakonam, took about three years in building and was completed about the close of 1881. It is a fine mansion.

—It cost him three-fourths of a lac and in its early days when the memory of the sums spent on it was fresh he used to call it his Folly. Writing after retirement to his early teacher, Mr. E. B. Powell, he says of it :—

“ It was no doubt a folly to spend so much as $\frac{3}{4}$ lac on a house. But I had seen the Taj and palaces on the banks of the Jumna and I was fired with ambition and burned my fingers. But it is really a comfortable house—people call it a palace. I am glad to say God has spared me to live in it the last years of my life.”

In the year, 1882, a great calamity befell Sashiah Sastri. His wife, who had been his loyal help-mate for nearly half a century, sickened and died in June 1882. She had, like him, set her heart on building the house. She had the satisfaction of seeing it completed, of living in it, celebrating in it the perpetuation of the family by the adoption of the motherless boy whom she had herself reared with motherly love, of daily bathing in the invigorating waters of the sacred



stream which flows past her house. Although she had been ailing for some time, there was nothing alarming till one night the sickness took a sudden turn for the worse and she died peacefully in her husband's arms. "The happiness of home is blighted for ever" is the wail that then burst from the lips of the bereaved husband. That short sentence, more pregnantly than volumes, gives expression to the chill that had fallen on his heart.

But time takes the sting out of many a grief and if it takes away those that are near and dear it also brings some blessings in its turn, which reconcile one to the loss in a manner. The home whose happiness, Sashiah Sastri thought in the bitter pang of bereavement, had been blighted for ever, has once more grown for him in the family of his adopted son—A. Subrahmanya Sastri, the virtuous son of a virtuous father, blessed with a sweetly-endowed wife whose gentle presence with that of her lovely children sheds round the hearth all the grace of sweet home. And the old grandfather's heart has twined round the little boys and many an hour is sweetened by the winsome sportiveness of his grandsons, of one of whom he writes, in one of his many letters of this kind, to his



cousin, A. Krishnaswami Aiyar, retired Deputy Collector, now at Kumbhakonam:—

“I wonder that you don't come to make his acquaintance and bless him *in propria persona*. He was giving me a very pleasant and happy hour this morning, his great grandmother having brought him upstairs to show how he looks with his tiny gold bangles and chain on. He is getting very fond of me already. I believe he finds a very broad cushion on his grandfather's extensive bodily domains.”

He had planned a suite of rooms abutting into the Kâveri. This idea he wished to see realised though his partner, who would have enjoyed it even more, was no more to share the joy. As he quaintly puts it:—

“I have not lost *all* yet and much that is dear to life still is left to me by the mercy of God. Among the rest is vanity and it is that which, upon analysis I find, impels me to build my follies to their completion.”

Two rooms projecting into the river were built over high arches, under which the stream flows, and flank a broad flight of granite steps which form a private bathing ghaut. The rooms are paved with polished marble slabs and command, from the windows, during the flood, a subtly soothing scenery which reminds one of the sonnet of Wordsworth beginning with

“Earth has not anything to show more fair.”

To this house he retired after leaving Pudukota;



his pension of Rs. 500 a month from Travancore added to his Pudukota pension of Rs. 400 has placed him in comfortable circumstances.

It was at first a severe wrench for him to leave Pudukota to which he had, in a manner, become rooted. Not that he ever cared for the money or the dignity of his office. The Pudukota of to-day is almost entirely of his making. He had sown the seeds of many beneficent reforms, he had carefully tended their germination and growth; he had seen most of them grow and bear fruit, he loved them all, his tanks and his roads and everything else, as the children of his bosom and when the time came for him to leave them in the care of others, his heart was still with them behind. A few extracts from his letters after retirement may illustrate his solicitude :—

“For the last three days I observed indications of rain in the direction of Pudukota. I hope these have not been deceptive.”

“I was very pleased to read your brief but graphic account of what is being done for the Town tanks and for village roads.”

“Six feet of water does not satisfy me and I long to hear of 15 ft. in the big tank. Then my heart will rejoice.”

“You must remember that the Pudukota State has acquired a reputation for roads and that that reputation must be —



kept up. I hope the maintenance grants are given without stint and you are able to have a good supply of gravel on the platform."

"I am getting so anxious about the season in Pudukota that I sometimes lose my sleep. If we have *abundant* rains in August and September the state may look forward to a tolerably fair season. Please write and inform me whenever you have a good downpour or have reports of it in the Taluks."

"I hope a class for drawing has been opened in the State Girls' School."

But he knew he had done his work and must rest. And he did indeed long for rest—complete rest after half a century of toil; but he feared, at the same time, that leisure would soon begin to pall. He used to compare himself to a *jutka* pony, which is never more at ease than when kicking and running. But he has found congenial employment for his hours; he rises at 7 in the morning and after ablutions and coffee opens the *tapal* and reads his letters; then an hour or more is given to the newspapers and periodicals; to his steward who comes to report on business matters and take instructions, and to visitors who often come to him for advice and help. Then comes breakfast at about 12. Then a few hours of rest during the heat of the day. He then writes his letters; he keeps up an extensive correspondence, in which he is still very regular. Among those



with whom he has had for many, many years past the privilege and honour of personal correspondence must be mentioned the present benevolent ruler of Travancore, whose confidence and esteem he has always enjoyed. As the evening draws near, come, in his own words, 'good company, congenial conversation and now and then a dip into the wisdom of our ancestors who have left us an immense legacy.' In the first months of retirement his large circle of relatives from adjoining villages, men and women, young and old, came up in numbers to visit the grand old man in his fine mansion and kept him engaged in talking and more often hearing; then came a lull; and time was sometimes heavy. It was about this time he writes to a friend:—

"I am settling down into my new life of retirement. This is the first time I take the sweets (and bitters!) of freedom. Sometimes I feel very queer, having nothing particular to do and nobody to talk to. But I think the leisure is fully required to recoup the hardworked animal and supply its old age wants."

It was the evenings that now and then wanted employment when friends to chat with failed. He tried evening drives but after a time gave them up. The roads were very trying, especially after his drives in Pudukota. Then he engaged a Pandit of rare scholarship and modesty, who kept



him company every evening till it was time for supper; and the evening hours were devoted to regular readings from Sanskrit Literature.

Thus he spends his time; occasionally the Collector of the District asks him for his opinion on questions in which the District is interested; occasionally the Madras Government consult him on questions of public interest. These sometimes keep him at extra work for weeks. When there ran rumours about the abolition of the Government College, Kumbakonam, he wrote many a letter to the then Director of Public Instruction, urging its retention. Governors of Madras have visited him in his home and found wisdom in his words. Reference has already been made to the visit of Sir Arthur Havelock, late Governor of Madras, who, when about to leave these shores, wrote to him :—

“I shall leave India with many regrets and with many happy memories. But, of these happy memories, there are few which hold a more conspicuous place than my acquaintance with yourself. The pleasant hour I spent with you in your house on the bank of the Cauvery will always remain fresh in my recollection. I recognised in you one of the most able and remarkable personalities of Southern India and I felt it a privilege to draw on your rich store of wisdom, of knowledge and of experience.”

His Excellency Lord Amphill, the present



Governor, also paid a visit to him last year; Lord Elgin, when Viceroy, halted for a short while at Kumbakonam during his southern tour, on purpose to see Sashiah Sastri and grant him an interview; Lord Curzon also gave him an interview, some time back, at Tanjore; and all these great men have gone impressed by the personality of the grand old man of Southern India. As Sir M. E. Grant Duff writes to Sashiah Sastri in one of his letters:—

“I have again and again said to others and there seems no reason why I should not say to you, that of all the native statesmen I have come across in any part of India you were the one who impressed me most favourably.”

His most Gracious Majesty Edward VII. has, in the birth day honours bestowed this year, made Sashiah Sastri a Knight Commander of the Star of India, Lord Curzon, Viceroy, wiring the news and his congratulations thus:—

“It gives me great pleasure to inform you that His Majesty has been pleased, upon my recommendation, to appoint you to be a K.C.S.I. Permit me to congratulate you heartily upon this distinction.”

And now it is time to bring this sketch to a close. The career of Sir Sashiah furnishes many a lesson of high import to the present generation. He has shown us how it is possible, even for the

1903
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71



A. SASHIAH SASTRI :

CSL

poorest among us, to rise to the highest eminence, rank and power by dint of honest, hard work, to come to be honoured of mighty potentates and rulers of the earth by steadily trying to do, to the best of our might, the work that is set before us, leaving the rest in the hands of Him who controls all things. To few men have been given the length of his public life and the wide range of his public action. But at no period during this remarkably long career has Sir Sashiah yielded to the temptation of fingering an unearned or ill-earned rupee or rising 'to dignity through indignity.' He has had no cynical contempt for the blessings of wealth or the good things of life but he has never had the unhealthy hankering for the flesh-pots of Egypt and the supreme faith in the 'Almighty dollar' which have come in the train of modern ideas.

Sir Sashiah has shown us that to succeed in life large grasp of principles must be combined with skill in the management of details and that the instinct of order should never be allowed to be crushed by the multiplicity of varied interests. Little things are often overlooked in the contemplation of grand theories and mighty results, but Sir Sashiah has always first cared for little things in whose train he has left the mighty



results to follow in their own time. This talent for details is almost the first thing that strikes a visitor and has enabled Sir Sashiah, more perhaps than anything else, to succeed so thoroughly in all he undertook and wherever he has been he has left behind him a tradition for order and mastery of details.

For nearly a quarter of a century, during the best part of his life, Sir Sashiah lived and worked in native states and the circumscribed sphere of his activities has kept from him the not unmixed advantage of looming more largely in the public eye or taking a more noticeable part in directing the destinies of Southern India. But within the province of his work he has always used his opportunities for the amelioration of the material well-being of those around him. He has made roads and bridges; he has brought into existence new tanks and renovated old ones and supplied people with unfailing sources of wholesome water; he has placed food within the reach of thousands of starving men and women; he has helped hundreds of deserving men to means of honourable living; he has added to the revenues of states and developed their resources; he has taken with him, wherever he went, the blessings of education and the comforts of modern civilisation;



and his distinctive personality, his geniality and charm of manner, his conversational powers and intellectual endowments have left an abiding influence on the more immediate circle of those, among the rulers and the ruled, who have had the pleasure or the privilege of close acquaintance.

All these form a record of which any one may be proud ; and Sir Sashiah has not obtained it without difficulties. Often has he been maligned and traduced by evil tongues ; often have his motives and actions been misconstrued and misinterpreted ; often has he had to face vehement and sometimes unscrupulous opposition. But he looked upon these troubles as the perquisites of his position and, steadily keeping his eye on the goal, calmly and cheerfully worked his way to it.

Sir Sashiah is one of the very few remaining links, in this part of India, between the dead and the living, between the old order of ideas and the new. With a reverent and grateful appreciation of the institutions of the past he combines a trustful confidence in the progressive development of human destinies. His mode of life is itself an embodiment of this happy combination. His halls are furnished with all the luxuries of modern life ; but he himself lives the rigidly simple life of the Rishis of old. Simple in dress,



tastes and style of living, liberal and even indulgent to those about him he preserves all that is lovable in the traditions of the land with at the same time a genuine admiration for the sturdy virtues of the Englishman, the manliness, the moral strength and the spirit of enterprise which have created for him an empire on which the sun never sets.



CSL

INDEX.

- Agrasala, Mismanagement of, 159.
Agrasala, Object of, 208.
Agricultural Banks, 280.
Aitchison, Sir Charles, 214.
Albert, Prince, 62.
Amani system, Evils of, 302, 303.
Amaravati, 2, 5, 25, 141.
Amphill, Lord, 398.
Anchana Newada system of Revenue Collection, 94.
Anderson, The Reverend John, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.
Andrew, Mr. James, 351.
Arbuthnot, Sir Alexander, K.C.S.I. 19, 22, 145, 150.
Ayilyam Tirunal, H. H., 191.

Ballard, Mr. G. A., 84, 110, 162, 184, 219.
Banbury, Mr. G., 136.
Barton, Mr., 185, 193.
Bird, Mr. E. W., 37, 73.
Bissoyee chiefs, 46.
Blair, Mr. W. T., 131, 133.
Bliss, Sir Henry, 334, 335, 351.
Bradlaugh, Mr. Charles, 375.
Braidwood, The Reverend John, 7, 9.
Buckingham, Duke of, 247, 248, 249, 251, 300.
Burnell, Dr., 97, 243.

Calico, derivation of, 63.
Carmichael, Mr. D. F., 254, 296, 374, 385.

Census of Masulipatam, 68.
Chellappa Pillay, 187.
Chentsal Rao, 132, 149, 218.
Chisholm, Mr., 203.
Clark, Sir George, 107.
Clive, Lord, 383, 388.
Coote, 383.
Cotton, Messrs. Onslow and, 29.
Cotton, Sir Arthur, 46, 247, 286.
Court of Directors, Despatches of the, 122, 123, 125.
Crawford, Mr. H., 182.
Crescent, The, 23, 34.
Crystal Palace, 61.
Curzon, Lord, 399.

Demosthenes, 26.
Digby, Mr., 239, 375, 377, 387.
Dinadayalu Naidu, 33, 56.
Dodson, The Rev. T. H., M.A., 8.
Drury, Col., 203.
Dussrah, 371.

Edinburg, His Royal Highness the Duke of, 381.
Edward VII., His Most Gracious Majesty, 217, 399.
Elgin, Lord, 398.
Elliot, Sir Walter, 31, 38, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 53, 73, 78, 111, 112, 307.
Elphinstone, Lord, 11, 21, 22.
England, Sir A. Sashiah Sastri invited to proceed to, 219.
European British subjects, Jurisdiction over, 204.

Fraser, Mr. James, 88, 92.
Fyffe, Captain J., 388.

Gladstone, Mr., 377.
Goldingham, Mr. J., 87, 110.
Goldsmith, Oliver, 5.
Gopala Aiyar, 4, 5, 6.
Gordon, Mr. A. A., M.A., 27.
Grant Duff, Sir M. E., 399.
Great Exhibition, The, 61, 62.
Great Mutiny, The, 102.
Grose, Mr. J., 146, 326.
Gundappa Raoji, 24, 36, 37, 49.

Havelock, Sir Arthur, 101, 398.
Hindu High School, Masulipatam, 99, 100, 101.
Hobhouse, Sir A., 260.
Holloway, Mr., 74, 75, 76, 85, 145, 149.
Huddleston, Mr. W., 219, 290.
Huffton, Mr., 7, 9.

Ilbert's Bill, 260.
Inam Commission, The object of, 113.
Inam tenure, 119.

Jaghirs, Grants of, 122.
Jamabundy in the fifties, 71, 72.
Jayaram Chetty, 142, 143.
Johnston, The Reverend, 7, 9.

Kasiyatra, The difficulties of, 39.
Kaveri, The virtues of the, 1, 2, 24.
Kistbundy, 285.
Knox, Mr., 114.

Kochar channel, The restoration of the, 197, 230.
Kolair Lake, A descriptive account of the, 46.
Kolhoff, Mr., 187.
Krishnaswami, 15, 48.
Kristodas Paul, 259.
Kumaraswami Mudaliyar, 49.
Kyle system of Revenue Collection, 92.

Lawrence, 383.
Local Self-Government, Minute on, 253.
Loverly, Basil, 12.
Lushington, Mr. T. D., 71, 78, 79, 87, 91, 97, 98.

Macdonald, Lt.-Col., 101.
Madhava Rao, Sir T., 12, 23, 29, 30, 34, 36, 41, 47, 86, 95, 132, 150, 153, 154, 156, 160, 166, 186, 194, 204, 253, 260, 290, 295, 297, 298, 334, 354, 384, 386.
Maharatta princes of Tanjore, 121.
Mansion House Fund, The, 234.
Markar, Mr., 117, 118. [243.
Marshman's History, 7.
Maskell, Mr. J., 32, 33.
Mayne, Mr. J. D., 205.
Miller, Dr. William, C.I.E., 10.
Montgomery, Sir Henry, 24, 30, 91, 107, 111.
Morris, Mr. G. L., 137, 140.
Mulam Tirunal, H. H., 233.
Mull, Derivation of, 62.
Mullins, Col., 196.



Munro, Sir Thomas, 286.
Murajapam, The, 169, 170.
Muslin, Derivation of, 62.
Muttuswami Aiyar, Sir T., 149,
251, 253.

Nagam Aiyah, 198.
Nanoo Pillay, 226.
Napier Museum, The, 203.
Narasinga Rao, Kandi, 35.
Nazrani, 124.
Newill, Mr., 103, 109, 110.
Noble, The Reverend R. T., 99.
Northbrook, Lord, 175.
Norton, Mr. George, 11, 19, 23,
31, 42, 45, 56, 77, 100, 106,
107, 108.

Oliver St. John, Col., 215.
Ollock of a girl, 25.
Olungu settlement, 116.
Onslow, Mr., 29.
Ormsby, Mr., 188.

achaiyappa Mudaliyar, 19, 21.
'admanabhaswami temple, mis-
management of, 159; tank of,
196; tower of, 199.

Padmatirtham, 196, 230.
Palang-posh, 64.
Pandian rulers of Madura, 121.
Pandias, 50, 51, 52.
Pattabhiraman Pillai, Rao Baha-
dur, 260.
Peacock, Sir Barnes, 265.
Periaswami Mudaliyar, 244.
Pettigrew, The Reverend, 203,
204.

Pichu Aiyar, 39, 48.
Porter, Mr. R. T., 23, 53, 54.
Powell, Mr. E. B., 12, 13, 14, 15,
16, 17, 18, 19, 25, 27, 41, 42,
43, 44, 112, 113, 144, 158, 159,
160, 392.

Proclamation of 1858, The, 206.
Public Service Commission, The
283.

Pycroft, Sir Thomas, 31, 32, 33,
35, 77, 78, 79, 81, 145.

Raghunatha Rao, Dewan Baha-
dur R., 149.

Ramanujam, V., 26.

Ramiengar, V., 12, 15, 26, 30, 34,
35, 36, 47, 56, 71, 99, 113, 115,
116, 144, 145, 149, 153.

Rangacharlu, C., 12, 110, 116,
117, 118, 128, 131, 134, 344.

Ranganatha Sastryar, 12, 29.

Rayappa, 38, 40, 41, 48.

Regulation IX of 1822, 73.

Regulation IX of 1882, Salt,
Reis and Rayyet, 216. [331.

Ripon, Lord, 252.

Robinson, Sir William, 147, 154,
220, 236, 239, 250, 299.

Rodriguese, Francis, 6.

Ross, Dr., 137, 185.

Roupell, Mr., 31.

Sadasiva Pillai, 33, 186, 188, 292.
Sambhu Chandra Mukherji, Dr.,
216.

Sewell, Mr. Henry, 292, 293, 294,
344.

Shadagopacharlu, 12, 83, 84.



INDEX.

CSL

- Stanley, Lord, 104, 107, 108.
Stokes, Sir Henry, 216, 318, 320,
326, 355, 362.
Subramanya Sastri, A., 393.
Sudder Adawlat, 66.
Sudr, 156, 159, 186.
Sullivan, Mr. H. E., 226.
Sutherland, The Duke of, 117.

Tanjore Settlement and Irriga-
tion, 285.
Taylor, Mr. G. N., 18, 110, 113,
114, 116, 117, 118, 125, 126,
127, 128, 129, 131, 132, 134.
Torch-light salaam, 57.
Trevelyan, Sir Charles, 100, 113,
117, 125.

Tweeddale, Marquis of, 22.

Umedvars, 40.

Venkaswami Rao, Dewan Baha-
dur, 391.
Victoria, Queen-Empress, Her
Most Gracious Majesty, 61,
103, 383.
Vijianagaram, Rulers of, 121.
Village Joint-rent system, 94.
Vizagam Tiranal, H. H., 153.

Watts, Mr., 182.
Wenlock, Lord, 388.
Wilks, Mr., M.I.C.E., 347, 350.

23110